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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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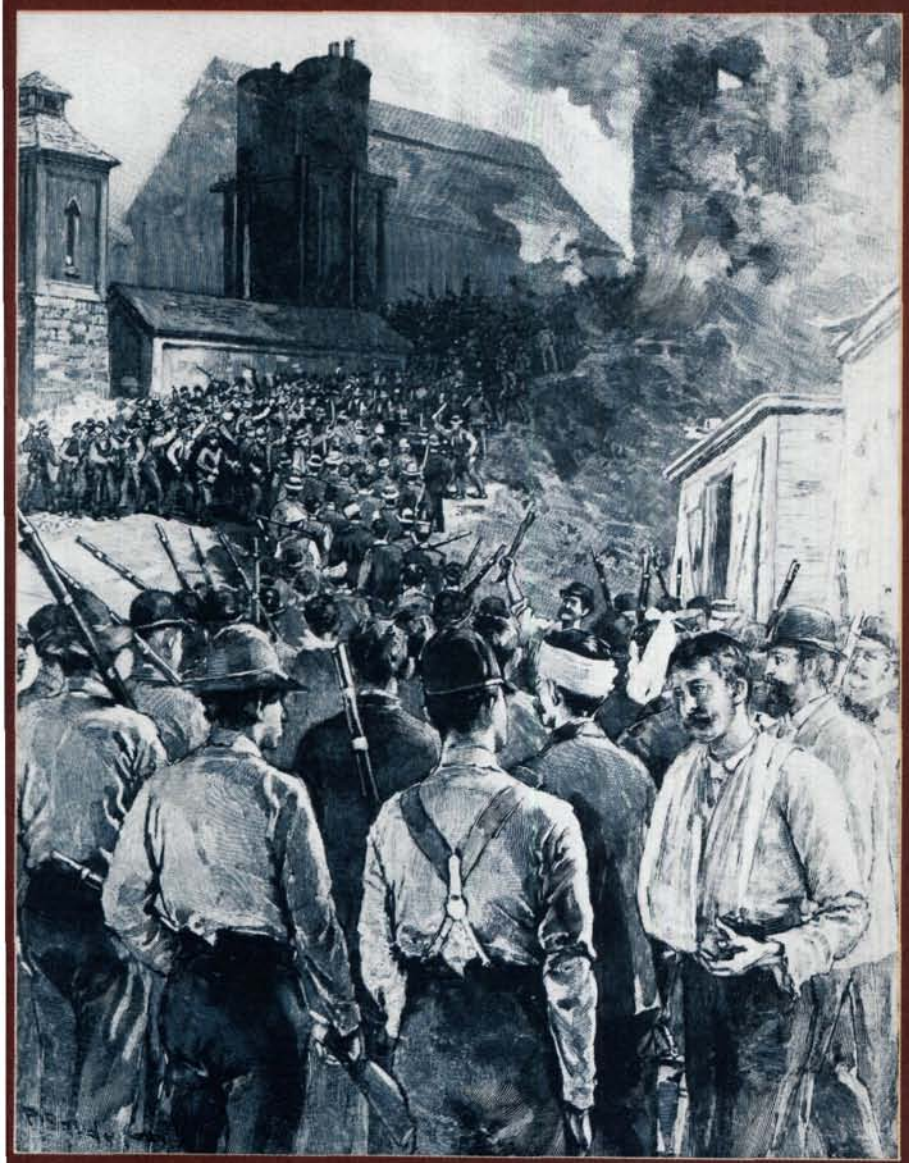
November 18, 1978 Price One Dollar

The Election: The Editors, John Osborne, Henry Fairlie



America's Neglected History

Lawrence Goodwyn

The Novelists (III): Joyce Carol Oates on Iris Murdoch

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When I told her about my raise last night, she said, "Don't spend it all in one place."

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TRB

from Washington
November 18, 1978

Voting Day

We go into the grammar school to vote. The last election placards are brandished outside and there is a motorcycle cop. The corridor inside has kindergarten pictures, a tricycle, colored posters of friendly animals. We proceed half-shyly amidst such innocence following arrows marked "Polling." The swinging doors open onto the school library, shelves crammed with a luxury of childish books, but today sober adult volunteers occupy the tables where we identify ourselves on the index. We get narrow pink ballots with candidates' names. Here are the booths with cardboard walls giving privacy, like voting inside a packing box: the watcher gives us a fiber pen and asks us, please, to blot the entire square of our choice—a regular pen, he says, won't register in the magnetic counting process. It is quiet, courteous, dedicated; the volunteers serve without pay; the kindergarten pictures look down gaily. It is 8 a.m. and this scene will be repeated across the nation as the sun moves west. In my cell I secretly vote for Fletcher, the Republican candidate for mayor. The city is five-to-one Democrat and if some Democrats don't save the GOP and the two-party system, who will? (It was compassionate throw-away votes like mine that elected Harry Truman in 1948!)

It is a listless, ho-hum election with only a minority of the American voters bothering to vote. Whose fault? Midterm elections should be abolished, with representatives' terms made four years, coterminous with presidents'. In the meantime, the election will keep political analysts busy a week interpreting it. The real news is mostly outside the election—the economy, for instance. Wall Street is voting, too, in its own way, this election day; the Dow Jones industrial average skids another 14 points before the November 7 polls are in.

I have come back from vacation to help cover the election and am glad to be back. I never realize till I go away what a hopeless addict I am to the Washington news scene, and I suffer withdrawal symptoms when I go away. Congress is winding up as I leave. How is the tax bill faring, the energy bill? Nobody I talk to on my vacation seems greatly concerned. I know all the minute intricacies, and the local paper fills the front page with Elizabeth Taylor, who has swallowed a chicken bone at a political rally, and with James Earl Ray, who has married in prison despite his lifeterm sentence. Surely the radio will be better? As I wake up at three in the morning I plug in my pocket earphone set, and roam over the night dial. This is near Jimmy Carter's home state; the programs are in three parts: sports, hillbilly music, eager clergymen urging me to repent. All night long. How about the tax bill? "Piniella's hit in the 10th boosts Yanks, four to three. . . . And now a hot little number from our station crooner. . . . We'll be back with Reverend Jones in a few minutes. . . ."

It is a kind of cultural accompaniment to the empty ballot box and it proceeds against some of the most exciting events in recent peacetime history. But of course to feel the excitement you have to understand the act. In the old days there were "runs" on banks. Lines formed outside to take out money and the banker ostentatiously brought in bullion in canvas bags. Then there were "panics" like Grant's in 1869 with a credit crunch, a market crash, banks suspended and Jay Gould cornering gold. Now we have had something like that in the past few weeks only vastly bigger in its way, though the public only dimly appreciates it. It is not a run on a bank, it is a run on the dollar . . . the United States.

For five years the United States has been living beyond its means in importing petroleum and three presidents haven't been able to check it: we have created an extraordinary trade deficit, which means we have loaded the industrial world with unwanted dollars when foreign banks' assets are in dollars, the world's currency. For two years Jimmy Carter vainly tried to get the 95th Congress to act, but the energy bill it passed is a travesty. Finally trading partners decided that America has turned flabby, lost its willpower. They began to sell dollars. Carter said he would announce his anti-inflation Phase II when Congress quit. It would be his big show, his test of credibility. He unveiled voluntary wage-price guidelines Tuesday, October 24, and appealed for cooperation. The stock market dropped seven points. Next day (Wednesday) Europe took the hint: *Dollar is Pounded to Record Low Overseas!* said the headline. The headline was on the financial page; the average citizen went on listening to hillbilly music. Next day the dollar was lower, and the stock market dropped some more.

The "run" against America was on. *Dollar Hits Record Lows for Third Consecutive Day* said the headline in Saturday's paper. The stock market ended the week in total rout, down 32 points.

This couldn't go on. There was near-panic on the London gold market Monday, October 31. The electioneering politicians didn't see the near-disaster because they are slow fellows, but Carter did. On Wednesday (November 1), six days before the election, the desperate president took the greatest gamble in his career and grimly announced the multi-billion, international dollar rescue operation. The stock market had tumbled 105 points in 12 trading days—losses of a ninth of its paper value. On the day he announced it the yo-yo market bounced back 35 points, the biggest one-day jump in history. Mike Blumenthal, the Treasury secretary, engineered it. Will the hope last? A little confidence oozed out of Wall Street last week, on election day. Meanwhile the oil-producing nations plan to boost prices 10 percent next month at Abu Dhabi.

So there he sat at breakfast, Secretary Blumenthal, the day after Carter's announcement, glasses on tablecloth, answering reporters' questions. A trace of accent; invisible eyebrows; pleasant manner; large homely features; lines under eyes; mousy hair; sideburns to earlobes; pink shirt; acting candid and confident.

There is nervous excitement. "Are you enjoying your job, Mr. Secretary?" [laughter]. . . . Most people in Washington (I think) believe that we are going to have a recession. Will it be "saucer-shaped" (mild), or "cup-shaped" (deep)? Recession is the old, old, capitalist way of braking inflation: how can you build houses at 11 percent interest? But Blumenthal says there need be no recession; there is a middle way. But, yes, there are undoubtedly "risks." . . . And so we leave the melodrama.

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Correspondence

Responsible referendums

To the editors:

Your article "A California Travesty" (*TNR*, October 28) commits the error, unfortunately common in *TNR*, of arguing against a specific position (in this case the odious California Proposition 6) by innuendo, using an unsupported generalization, *viz*, that "public referendums [you fail to make the important distinction between initiative and other referendums] caught on as a way for voters to express themselves on isolated issues without the difficulty and delay of the legislative process. The only problem is that often, without due consideration for all sides in a full-time representative body, the impulsive choices voters make turn out badly." Now it's true that people who are constitutionally opposed to referendums accept this notion, but you should have taken the trouble, before repeating it, to see whether there are any facts to support it.

There aren't. For instance, in a study published a few years ago in *Parliamentary Affairs*, Penelope Gazey examined the use of all four types of referendums throughout the US in the period 1945-68. She concluded that the procedures do not produce oppressive or irrational laws; on the contrary, they tend to "represent stable social and political patterns in the population," and to produce "reasonable, effective law."

As you say, the status of Proposition 13 remains problematic. But in the 150 California initiatives voted on before 1970, it is notable that only a single crackpot measure, the 1948 McLain Initiative, was actually passed—and even more notable that it was repealed the following year, by an initiative.

Thomas H. Johnson
Silver Spring, Maryland

What's so funny?

To the editors:

It made me angry to read former *National Lampoon* editor Sean Kelly quoted at length in Arthur Lubow's fine piece, "Screw You Humor" (*TNR*, October 21). You'd think Kelly, a rich man, was champion of the indigent and of social justice by the way he pontificates about the present editorial foolishness and meanness of the *National Lampoon* staff. This is the fellow who brought us such memorable pieces as the viciously anti-semitic caricature of folksinger Bob Dylan and such fine doggerel as "For the Benefit of Mr. Kike."

The real problem with Kelly was that he was never funny. Unless you like the sort of humor Julius Streicher used to serve up.

Michael Krasny
San Francisco, California

To the editors:

For seven years now, directly above the desk at which I work each day, hangs a large sheet of rare papyrus, framed in non-glare glass and dated July 31, 1971, which was given to me as a gift by David McClelland. On it are quotations, inscribed by David in his brilliantly original calligraphy, including John Donne's remark that "If I must shipwreck I would do it in a sea," and Auden's fine lines: "Even a limerick ought to be something a man of honour, awaiting death from cancer or a firing squad, could read without contempt." These are not ideas a joker takes to heart, nor do they suggest the sort of person whose suicide at a party is a matter of public display.

David was also in the habit of drawing elaborate cartoons, each of which must have taken lots of time, which he then gave to friends to cheer *them* along when living got painful. The logic of these drawings was always the same: antagonisms are resolved by comic means, often with the help of a clumsy, hippo-like monster benignly known as The Boggie, in such a way as to assure us, tenderly, happily, that after all life is OK. For David, of course, life was not OK, his mental balance was precarious, and his genius, which served his friends, in the end could not save him.

I was—and still am—shocked by Arthur Lubow's use of David's suicide as a hook for his article on so-called "Lampoon humor" in the October 21 issue of *TNR*. I condemn Mr. Lubow's treatment of David's death, even though, to be fair, I can see that Lubow seems as horrified as I am by the jokes David's "friends" circulate about the way he died. Who are these "friends"? David was one of the few people I know for certain I've loved; and when Billy, his brother, told me what had happened, his voice was so very reluctant, so very careful of *my* feelings, because he felt my feelings mattered, and mattered precisely because David's friends would naturally and deeply be hurt by such news.

So who are these "friends" who make jokes? The kind of loathsome humor which Mr. Lubow deplores I too detest. But in memory of David, and for the honor of his friends as well, I must refuse and deny the ugliness which Mr. Lubow inadvertently casts over one of the saddest events the friends of David McClelland shall know.

Terrence Des Pres
Hamilton, New York

In defense of Mr. Fairlie

To the editors:

Several letters have been published recently in your correspondence columns containing sharp and, we believe, unfair criticism of Mr. Henry Fairlie. Although we are sure he needs no one to spring to his defense, we thought you might like to know that there is at least one family readership out here in the wilds of western Pennsylvania turning enthusiastically each week to the table of contents to find out whether Henry has added another arrow to his quiver for our intellectual stimulation, instruction and pleasure.

Not that we agree with everything he writes, but his style and underlying mixture of *gravitas* and humor are a joy to read in what has otherwise reduced itself to the contemporary literary desert.

In a recently syndicated article, Tom Wicker complains that *Commentary*, *The Public Interest* and *The Wall Street Journal* have now become the most influential publications read by informed people today. We believe that *The New Republic* should have been included in this august company; for the many reasons cited by Mr. Fairlie in his excellent article published in the October 21 issue of *TNR* ("The Readers of Serious Magazines"). With so many erudite and thoughtful contributors, how can you avoid exercising an important influence on the world of letters as well as politics, not only in Washington but also out here? Please keep up the good work.

Richard and Agnes Putman
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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Comparative Financial Review

	Years ended December 31, 1977	1976
Income		
Life premiums	$22,340,297	$16,150,742
Accident and health premiums	25,683,413	23,593,214
Investment and other income	4,799,481	4,090,525
Total income	52,823,191	43,834,481
Benefits and expenses		
Life claims and other benefits	4,126,231	3,735,055
Accident and health claims	12,430,024	11,644,002
Increase in liability for future policy benefits	12,196,239	8,711,984
Amortization of policy acquisition costs	5,183,133	4,431,061
Commissions	5,943,151	5,224,771
General expenses and insurance taxes	5,869,697	5,652,642
Dividends to policyholders	298,064	299,032
	46,046,539	39,698,547
Income before income taxes and realized investment gains (losses)	6,776,652	4,135,934
Provision for income taxes		
Current	—	—
Deferred	1,909,150	1,209,252
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	4,867,502	2,926,682
Realized investment gains (losses)	11,364	356,057
Net income	$ 4,878,866	$ 3,282,739
Earnings per share		
Income before realized investment gains (losses)	$ 2.88	$ 1.76
Realized investment gains (losses)	.01	.21
Net income	$ 2.89	$ 1.97

Assets	$116,000,000
Insurance in Force	$1,289,599,000

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts, Vol. 179, No. 21, Issue 3332, November 18, 1978. Published weekly (except the issues of July 15, August 12, September 2, December 30) and distributed by The New Republic, Inc., 1220 19th Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20036. Phone (202) 331-7494. Single copy, $1.00; Yearly subscriptions, $24; foreign, $27; students $17.

Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions, undelivered copies and changes of address to Subscription Service Department, The New Republic, P.O. Box 58, Whitinsville, MA 01588. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but cannot be considered or returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

November 18, 1978

Midterm Madness

Sorting through the results of the 1978 election for clues to the future is like putting colored beads on a string at random, then looking back to see whether a pattern emerges. Each preliminary conclusion requires qualification, the meaning of each victory or defeat registers differently on different tote boards. One thing does seem clear: like nature, the American electorate makes no great jumps. The next Congress will resemble the last Congress, just as the last one did the one that came before. The internal gyroscopes of the two parties are set aspinning to establish a new tilt for each, but movement is measured in millimeters. Still, for some the stakes were higher than for others last Tuesday, and looking back at the campaign and election we can offer a preliminary assessment.

Start first with President Carter. What he gets out of all this is a Congress of eager listeners. Those obstinate representatives who fiddled with his energy and tax programs until the final hours went home with echoes of Proposition 13 ringing in their ears, and most of them—Republicans and Democrats alike—repaired to the banners of Howard Jarvis or Kemp and Roth.

Instant analyses of the vote indicate that the normal bases of Democratic support remained intact. Except in the South, things broke along the electoral lines of the New Deal. Many Democrats who were elected last time as advocates of standard Democratic liberalism simply adopted a new rhetoric for 1978 which resembles Mr. Carter's own: they became fiscally responsible tax cutters and trimmers of government waste. And they got themselves reelected, by and large, by the same groups that had elected them before. These results should give Carter an opportunity to play coalition politics in the 96th Congress and forge majorities to reflect the fiscally conservative mood of the electorate. That bodes ill for items on the legislative agenda like national health insurance. The loss of liberal senators such as Dick Clark of Iowa, Floyd Haskell of Colorado and Wendell Anderson of Minnesota also may mean trouble for Carter's strategic arms limitation (SALT) treaty. But the new Congress generally seems to fit Carter's own recent mood, as well as that of the country.

So although he was not a major factor in many races, President Carter comes out marginally a winner with an opportunity to make himself more so. Carter went into this midterm election riding a small surge in the polls and a large surge in editorial assessments of his abilities. The man who was routinely judged as incompetent for much of the last two years begins the second half of his term with that assessment suspended and some time to consolidate his gains. He now gets two months with the old Congress gone and the new one not yet arrived before the real action begins again on Capitol Hill. By the end of that time, the initial effects of his inflation initiative and his efforts to shore up the dollar should be felt and the final touches may be put on the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. If he can make the most of this interlude, with, perhaps, a little reshuffling of personnel, President Carter could find himself enjoying a second honeymoon around the first of the year.

Those who had the most at stake last week were the leaders of the minority party. Two battles are underway here among the Republicans. One is for survival and another is for control. In the first battle, the GOP at least held its own against historical trends and further erosion. In the House of Representatives, which provides the traditional yardstick of out-party fortunes at the midterm elections, Republicans came out slightly below the average 34-seat gain, but not enough below to encourage talk of expiration. Slippage there will be more than offset by their gains in governorships (Texas, Minnesota, Nevada, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Nebraska, Tennessee and Oregon) and advances in the 6113 state legislative races that were on the ballot last Tuesday. Faced with reapportionment following the 1980 census, the Republican National Committee put heavy emphasis on base building operations in the state legislatures to keep themselves from being redistricted further into oblivion in states where Democrats now

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have hands on all the levers. There is still too much dust stirring to assess whether the GOP has a sufficient foothold in the legislatures and statehouses to hold off a widespread Democratic gerrymander.

In the fight over terrain, both wings of the Republican party gained and gave a little ground. Among the know-nothings, Jesse Helms, Strom Thurmond and John Tower all hung on; and, in Iowa, the New Right adds the senatorial-looking Roger Jepsen, wearing the liberal scalp of Dick Clark on his belt. On the other hand, the Republic must figure out how to muddle through without the ravings of soon-to-be-former Governor Meldrim Thomson, who added a special kookiness to the politics and presidential primary of New Hampshire. The loss of Edward Brooke and Clifford Case thins the Senate ranks of the progressive wing of the GOP, but David Durenberger and Rudy Boschwitz from Minnesota join those ranks along with the able William Cohen from Maine. The most important gains of what once was called the Rockefeller wing of the Republican party were registered in the midwest, where they held onto statehouses in Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois and Kansas, and added Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wisconsin. For 1980 presidential politics, the midwestern base of progressive Republicanism is in better shape than at any time in the past decade, and inevitably alters the balance of power within the GOP.

Republican National Chairman Bill Brock is a man whose job will be reviewed based on the midterm outcome. He is the architect of an ambitious and well conceived base-broadening program for Republicans nationally, including well publicized efforts to recruit blacks and independents. He deserves plenty of credit for that and the results should confirm at least modest success to all but the most determinedly purist and backward-looking. Nevertheless, the New Right has already launched another barrage on Brock, calling for his ouster on grounds that he overplayed Kemp-Roth and it just didn't take hold with the voters. The results actually showed something slightly different. The voters were impressed by Republican nostrums but preferred to believe that Democrats will implement them. In effect, they seemed to be saying that they doubt the Republican party is a credible opposition. That's not Bill Brock's fault, but it's an ominous reading of the future of a party that controls barely one-third of the Congress and claims the loyalty of less than a fifth of the electorate.

Among the most prominently mentioned Republican presidential prospects, Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee and Governor Jim Thompson of Illinois demonstrated just what they needed to—that they occupy their home bases securely, even when the voters know well they will be looking abroad in the months ahead. Baker's opponent tried the right-wing Panama Canal issue against him and it didn't work, demonstrating the bankruptcy of that gambit. Baker's stature should also be increased by President Carter's late campaign swing to Tennessee. Carter sees in Baker a future opponent who could threaten the President's own southern base. He tried to trim Baker's margin a bit and reduce some of Baker's appeal for 1980. He failed. Thompson's prospects are boosted not only by the fact that he has now proved himself a big winner twice, but also by the fact that he has demonstrated an ability to draw Democrats, independents and blacks along with the usual Republican mix. Other 1980 hopefuls like Ronald Reagan, John Connally, George Bush and Gerald Ford profitably used the midterm campaign to acquire a few chips for cashing two years hence, but Baker and Thompson are the biggest gainers.

On the Democratic side, the California results are a mixed bag for Jerry Brown. On the one hand, his huge personal majority gives him enough spring in the board to challenge Carter in 1980. On the other hand, no politician profits from being identified as a politician without coattails. Until it was too late, Brown gratuitously ignored the rest of the Democratic ticket, and watched his running-mates Lieutenant Governor Mervyn Dymally and attorney general candidate Yvonne Braithwaite Burke go down to defeat. Asked on election night what message he read in the 1978 outcome, Brown replied, "Limiting the public sector is the message of Prop 13. The historic mission of the Democratic party is to curb government spending." If that's the line Jerry Brown intends to push in his seduction of anti-Carter Democrats in the 1980 primaries, there may be another lowering of expectations in his future.

With Republican conservatives moving into Democratic primaries, Democrats wrapping themselves in Republican issues and special interest groups playing kamakazi politics across party lines, 1978 was an election that weakened party identification even further. It also leaves the party system looking no more competitive, a little weaker and less relevent. One thing that surely contributes to the weakness of the two major parties is that voters no longer believe they stand for anything, and this year major figures in both parties contributed to that impression.

Take Ronald Reagan for example. Two years ago he told the Kansas City Republican convention that he could not support President Ford unless the GOP platform included solid conservative principles. This year, Reagan was more interested in base broadening than ideology, so he stumped agreeably for Republicans of any stripe, telling them to concentrate on five words in their campaigns—"Family, work, neighborhood, freedom and peace." From conservative principles to the purest political pabulum.

On the Democratic side there are many examples, but two stand out, and they involve the country's two top Democrats, President Carter and Vice President Mondale. In two traditionally liberal states,

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Massachusetts and Minnesota, two very conservative Democrats captured party nominations: Ed King for governor in Massachusetts and Robert Short for Hubert Humphrey's old senate seat in Minnesota. Both did it by embracing all of this year's buzz words: abortion, busing, taxes, the death penalty. One aide to King said, "We just put all the hate groups into one cauldron and let it boil." Both men ran straight against the platforms of the national Democratic party and their respective state parties.

No matter. The Democratic umbrella is exceptionally wide these days. In Massachusetts, President Carter got right on the telephone to urge Governor Michael Dukakis to endorse the man who beat him. To his credit, Dukakis said, "No, thanks." King won anyway.

In Minnesota, Vice President Mondale made a special trip home to urge Democrat-Farmer-Labor party leaders to get behind Short. They too declined. And Short lost. If you believe, as we do, that the parties will continue to decline until the voters believe they mean something again, then the real heroes are not those who promote expediency. The real heroes are those who are willing to stand aside in the short run and insist that it's still worthwhile to try to stuff some meaning into the two parties.

Where the finger-pointers should be pointing.

Who Lost Iran?

Even with the shah still tottering on his peacock throne last week, the "Who lost Iran?" talk was starting in Washington. If and when the monarchy collapses, with all the enormous strategic implications that might have, it seems likely that the finger-pointers' favorite targets will be President Carter's human rights policy and those in the State Department who still take it seriously. But the blame will be misdirected. If the shah falls, it will primarily be the shah's own fault. But it will also be the fault of those American officials who for more than 10 years have kept the US government cut off from opposition groups in Iran, with the result that the Carter administration had no idea that things would get as bad as they are for the shah and now has no idea what to do about it.

An indication of how the culprit-hunting is likely to go was provided in an NBC-TV interview with Henry Kissinger, who said that the administration should stop making statements that encourage the shah's opposition, and instead should give the shah unswerving support. The United States, Kissinger said off-camera, "has to bear some responsibility" for the crisis in Iran.

Along the same line, another former high-ranking official of the last administration said that early Carter criticism of the shah's human rights inadequacies encouraged the opposition to think the United States might withdraw its support from the regime. Even when President Carter made it clear that basic American policy had not changed, this former official said, "it sounded as though the administration was saying 'we still regard the shah as a repressive dictator, but he's too important for us to oppose.' The message to the people in the streets was, 'go at him.'"

According to the finger-pointers, the Carter administration nagged mercilessly for the shah to liberalize, and when he released some political prisoners, reined in the secret police and loosened up on censorship, the result was that the top blew off of his country. The blame for this is being directed variously at US Ambassador William Sullivan, who delivers the State Department's messages in Tehran, and at the department's human rights chief, Patricia Derian, whose office has been pushing for reforms. Sullivan, one of those iron ambassadors who gets sent to hard places like Laos and the Philippines, is likely to survive the heat. The human rights staff may be more vulnerable. Already the word is out that it wanted to deny the shah tear gas to control his riots. The State Department also is accused, in these life-or-death days, of combining its statements of support for the shah with prodding remarks about elections and free speech—implicitly signaling displeasure with the shah and giving comfort to those who want to oust him.

There is even some evidence that Zbigniew Brzezinski, the president's national security adviser, is playing (or anticipating) "Who lost Iran?". His personal statement of support for the shah contained no namby-pamby references to liberalization and, according to columnists Evans and Novak, he called the shah on President Carter's behalf to tell him: "Do whatever you feel you must to restore authority and stability. Whatever it is, we are 100 percent behind you." If this really happened as reported, and I believe it did, Brzezinski in effect was inviting the shah to save himself by using any methods his sadistic imagination might suggest. Brutality so far has worked for Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua, but in his case, it has been roundly (and rightly) condemned by the United States. Evans and Novak also delightedly reported, that the Iranian crisis has presidential aides "entertaining

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bitter doubts about the demise of the Central Intelligence Agency, the overuse of human rights to determine US policy and obsessive fear of using American power."

Experiencing its first major international scare, it seems that the Carter administration is dropping what might be termed the Christian approach to world affairs, and opting for the Machiavellian alternative: in a real crunch, anything goes. Morality is out at the White House, and *realpolitik* is in.

There are two apparent reasons for this switch. One is political. If the shah falls, the White House does not want President Carter blamed for it; better the finger-pointers should aim at the State Department. The second reason is strategic. Iran really is important, one of the most important places in the world, and its "loss" would be a stunning blow indeed. Iran has been the dependable supplier of 13 percent of America's oil imports and even larger proportions for Japan and much of Europe. It is also Israel's largest supplier. More important, it is the most populous and militarily powerful nation on the Persian Gulf, the single largest source of free world oil. Iran dominates—and the shah's navy protects—the Straits of Hormuz, the narrow waterway through which these oil supplies are transported.

Under the shah, Iran also has served as a pro-Western barrier against Soviet expansion toward the Gulf and the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean to the South. Iran helped the oil state of Oman put down one radical rebellion, and has been viewed as a source of stability to other weak countries in the region. To help Iran perform its role as a bulwark of Western interests, the United States has sold some $15 billion worth of military supplies to the shah since 1971, including some of our most sophisticated hardware.

Overthrow of the shah would not necessarily lead to a cutoff of oil or actual Soviet advances in the region, but any American administration obviously must be worried by threats to what has seemed a stable status quo. This administration may be even more worried than others, because it already stands accused of presiding over a steady erosion of American power in the area. Afghanistan has been taken over by Communists and its neighbor, Pakistan, has decided to transfer its ambassador, Yakub Khan, from Washington to Moscow as a demonstration of flagging confidence in the US. South Yemen, too, has fallen to pro-Soviet elements, and that causes nervousness in Saudi Arabia and other West-leaning countries in the region. It is not just Republicans and right-wing Democrats who accuse the Carter administration of not being tough enough in foreign policy; our allies do, as well. If the shah were to fall, inevitably it would be perceived as a loss to the United States and a gain for the Soviet Union. And countries around Asia and the Middle East would join in finger-pointing at the Carter administration.

But the fingers would be pointed in the wrong direction. The shah's own policies are responsible for the danger he faces, and policies of past American administrations are responsible for the dangers we face in the event of his downfall.

Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi has done a lot for the people of Iran in his 37 years as ruler. He emancipated women, redistributed land, doubled literacy, gave workers a share in industrial profits, improved health care and education and increased life expectancy from 35 years to 52. He used oil wealth to change Iran from a weak, backward state into an almost-modern regional power. But in some ways, he moved too far, too fast, and in others, he has done too little, too late. His modernization brought on social dislocation, inflation, corruption and ever-rising expectations. Meanwhile, his absolute dictatorship crushed traditional political forms, but failed to allow modern ones to develop.

The shah's rule was seriously threatened twice before. In 1953, he actually was forced to flee the country, but was brought back to power in a CIA-assisted coup that ousted the leftist-nationalist government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq. In 1963, the shah put down rightist rioters who opposed his land reforms and women's rights policies and exiled the religious leader, Ayatollah Khomayni, who is now his mortal enemy. Following the 1963 troubles, the shah began ruling ruthlessly as well as absolutely. His secret police, the SAVAK, became infamous around the world—and justifiably—for torture and oppression. The shah allowed only his own political party, emasculated Parliament, imposed rigid censorship on the press and appointed military tribunals to jail political suspects without legal niceties.

Also in the mid-1960s, the shah successfully demanded that the United States cut off embassy contact with all opposition elements, no matter how mild. According to some Iran scholars, this policy extended to the CIA station, which henceforth got its information exclusively from SAVAK. It is not clear which American officials instituted this policy, but the United States is reaping rotten fruit from it this year. The embassy has grossly underestimated the depth of resentment against the shah, the power of the religious elements and the charismatic force of the exiled Khomayni. "We have been as isolated as we allowed the Shah to become," one high-ranking official said.

For example, last week when American newspapers and television were concentrating on riots and burning buildings in Tehran, top American officials in Washington understood that the most dire threat to Iran actually lay in the general strike that shut down the country's oil fields. These officials were aware that the oil strikers were highly organized and well-coordinated, using similar tactics and leveling similar demands in widely separated places. The officials claimed to be suspicious about who might want to

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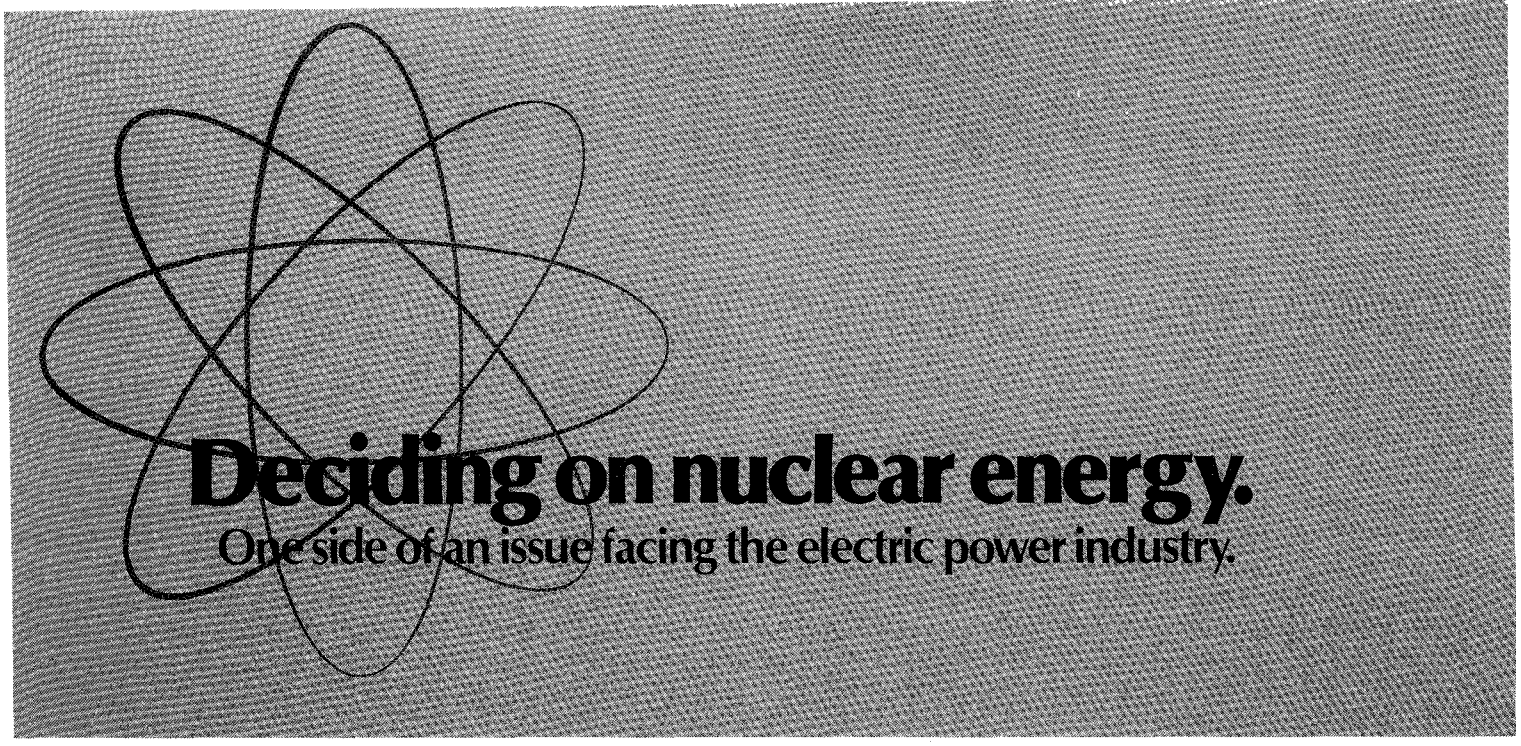

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Nuclear generation of electricity has grown because of its safety, reliability and economy. No other industry started with a greater appreciation of potential hazards. None is operated under more stringent occupational and environmental safeguards.

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Nuclear power makes economic sense in meeting growing energy demands and in reducing the nation's dependence on oil and gas.

Unless we try to rely entirely on coal production for generation, or to shut down the economy until forms like solar power prove affordable, nuclear power will become increasingly important to the near-term well-being of the country.

Nuclear policy

The electric utility industry agrees with the many expert opinions that ultimate disposal of radioactive wastes presents no insurmountable technical problems. Several acceptable methods are available.

But failure of the federal government to implement available nuclear waste disposal technology is being mistakenly seen as an indication that the nuclear waste issue cannot be resolved.

Recently, we urged the Administration to take advantage of extensive, existing technical and scientific knowledge and to implement a program on a rigid schedule to provide a spent-fuel storage facility and a waste repository at the earliest practical time. These steps are necessary to assure the continued operation of nuclear power plants, to minimize the uncertainty that has been slowing down commitments for future nuclear plants in this country, and to separate the waste disposal issue from the licensing of new power plants.

Congress has divided responsibility for the national waste management program among several agencies of the federal government. The Department of Energy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency have elements of responsibility.

Now, Congress must provide additional effective legislative guidance for the waste management and spent-fuel storage programs.

The long run

Opinion polls repeatedly show that majorities of the American people support the use of nuclear energy to generate electricity. Where nuclear plants are in operation, the percentages are even higher.

If we are to be able to take advantage of the economic and energy-supply opportunities presented by nuclear energy, both in the near term and the long term, the federal government will need to take responsible action today.

If you would like to read more about nuclear energy as a source of electricity or learn more about the management of high-level radioactive wastes and spent fuel, write to us: Edison Electric Institute, 90 Park Ave., New York, NY 10016. We will be glad to send you more information.

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wreck the Iranian economy, but they confessed that the US embassy and the CIA were unable to provide any information about who was leading the workers.

A former top CIA official said: "There has been a massive intelligence failure in Iran. My old agency has struck out completely." Despite the presence of some 40,000 Americans in Iran, and close ties that US military and US arms suppliers maintain with the Iranian military, major US decision-makers seem to have no accurate information about what factions might exist in the army, how long it might remain loyal to the shah and how many orders to shoot civilians its discipline can stand.

The US government also seems to be in the dark about the ideas and intentions of Ayatollah Khomeny. Officials of the shah's government commonly brand him a right-wing obscurantist who would try to turn the country back from modernity and might plunge it into chaos or even civil war. However, some Iran scholars contend that his program and that of his followers would be reasonably progressive economically, certainly anti-Communist and nationalist, not pro-Soviet. Some of these scholars foresee a linkup between Khomeny and the military, the removal of the shah and the establishment of an "Islamic Republic" that would continue to need links to the West to operate its oil fields and industries. Such a regime almost certainly would cut off oil sales to Israel and might try to ban movies, dancing, gambling and Western dress for women. On the other hand, if Khomeny's most extreme followers exercise power, women might be banned from professions and public office, Jews and other minorities might be banished or brutalized and oil might be employed as a political weapon.

For the United States, an Islamic Republic in Iran, particularly a military one, would not be ideal. But, the US government seems so cut off from the main actors in Iranian affairs (outside the shah's court and a thin layer of the country's elite) that it has little idea what real possibilities exist. American officials make no claim whatever to being able to influence events, which means they have no power to influence the people who will influence events, except for the shah. "It seems absolutely stupefying," an Iran scholar said, "but after all the money, people and effort we've put into that country, we don't know what's going on."

As a result, US government officials have been busy concocting scary scenarios for what might follow the shah's fall. These scenarios seem theoretically plausible, but their probabilities and implications are unknown. The favorites include military dictatorship, radical right-wing dictatorship, radical left-wing dictatorship and anarchy, which might or might not open the way for overt or covert Soviet involvement. Continued rule by the shah is clearly preferable to all of these, and so that is what the United States is for. The State Department is for it with the proviso that it should lead to a constitutional monarchy. Zbigniew Brzezinski favors it, no matter what. The question is, can the shah actually survive? He has appointed a military government that is busy arresting former loyal servants of the shah, some on trumped-up charges, some for real offenses. It could be that the arrests will appease the shah's opposition, or it could be they will only serve to remind the country who's presided over the iniquities of the past.

Probably continued rule by the shah is the best available alternative we have. But it might have been better rule, and it might have had a better chance of survival, if the United States had been able to tell the shah that his old style of governance was going wrong. If he hadn't been willing to do something about it, at least we would have been able to cement relations with those likeliest to replace him. That would have been a *real* policy of *realpolitik*. As matters now stand, he's in danger of falling, and we're in danger of suffering for it. We're stuck with the shah, but we stuck ourselves. If the shah falls, it won't be the human rights advocates who lost Iran.

Morton Kondracke

White House Watch

Making a Difference

The word at the White House last summer and afterward was that the President would campaign for Democratic candidates in the midterm elections only in races and states where he thought his intervention might "make a difference." That by and large was what he did, coast to coast, with increasing frequency from mid-October until the weekend before November 7. How much and what kind of difference he made was an imponderable that the results did not resolve. Watching Carter campaign for others led this observer to two conclusions. The President enjoyed being on the road, away from the White House and intermittently recalling his own nomination and election triumphs in 1976. And, without suggesting that there was anything wrong or hypocritical in his midterm campaigning for Democratic candidates in the states he visited, the difference he most wanted to make was for himself and his renomination and reelection in 1980.

The day before the elections, while the President rested at his mountain retreat, Camp David, Press Secretary Jody Powell was asked whether Carter felt that he had indeed made a difference. Or had he simply been through an obligatory partisan exercise? "There is

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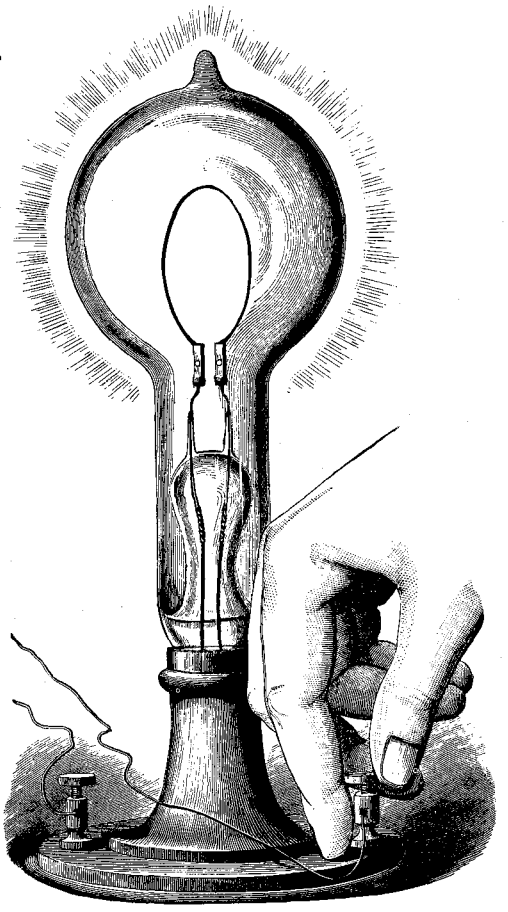

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no doubt," Powell answered, "that he feels good about the campaign trips and we feel that we have been helpful." Much the same was said on behalf of Vice President Walter Mondale. He campaigned more intensively than Carter did, usually apart from the President. At the last they appeared together on two visits to three cities in Mondale's home state, Minnesota, where Carter invested more of his time and prestige than in any other state. There, too, Carter found himself in the kind of dilemma that presidents and especially presidents with Carter's professed ideals and standards get themselves into when they support all of their party's candidates, merit aside. Carter said the Minnesota elections were the most critical in the nation. His and Mondale's three principal candidates—for the governorship and for two US Senate seats—lost to Republicans.

One of the Senate losers, former Governor Wendell Anderson, is a liberal Democrat in the tradition of Hubert Humphrey, who died last year. Carter repeatedly invoked Humphrey's name and Mondale literally begged him to speak from the grave in support of Anderson and of the Democratic (in Minnesota, Democrat-Farmer-Labor) candidate for governor, Rudy Perpich. Anderson was governor and Perpich was lieutenant governor when Mondale resigned from the Senate to run for the vice presidency with Carter in 1976. Anderson resigned from the governorship and Perpich, succeeding him, appointed him to Mondale's seat. Many Minnesotans did not forgive the two of them for that deal. The determining factor, the event that tore the Democrat-Farmer-Labor party in pieces and confronted Carter with his dilemma, was the nomination of Bob Short, an ultra-reactionary millionaire, for election to the Senate seat vacated by Humphrey's death and held temporarily by his wife Muriel. Short had once been Humphrey's campaign manager but that association, long since obscured by Short's turn to the far right, did him no good with Humphrey liberals. At a rally in Minneapolis, at least 2000 of 6000 people in the hall leaped to their feet, booing and shouting "STOP SHORT!" when Carter referred to "next Senator Bob Short." Carter went rigid when continuing boos and shouts silenced him. Finally, as if by prearrangement, Short rose from his seat on the platform and Carter wheeled toward him and shook his hand. The boos and shouts subsided, but not the hatred and division they reflected. Other factors, including an evident swing from Humphrey-Mondale liberalism and such petty horrors as the resentment of snowmobilers who blamed Anderson for voting to curtail their freedom to ravage the Minnesota wilderness and run deer to death by exhaustion, contributed to the defeats. Carter handled himself well and did what he conceived to be his party duty, to the point of supporting a candidate whom he could not have really wanted in the Senate.

At most stops during 22 days of campaigning in 31 states since last February, Carter did his duty by the candidates and then said he wanted to talk a little about himself, his administration and what he and it have done for the country. Then followed a litany ranging from progress toward "effective and efficient government" to the country's "first comprehensive energy program" to cutting federal taxes and holding down the federal budget to the promise of peace in the Middle East. It was a skillful blend of fact and exaggeration, never to the point of outright deception, and it clearly was aimed at victory in 1980 for himself and the party.

Carter campaigning placed himself in some situations that he could not have wanted to be caught in. At a rally in Sacramento he said he came to salute "one of our nation's greatest governors . . . my friend and your governor, Jerry Brown." Brown defeated Carter in five Democratic primaries in 1976 and is suspected of intent to go for the nomination in 1980. He gave Carter a friendly but terse introduction. During a speech that covered the usual subjects from improved government to peace in the Middle East, Carter noticed several signs reading "No to Proposition 6." Proposition 6 was a referendum proposal to bar homosexuals from employment in public schools. At the end of the speech Carter turned from the microphone and, obviously unaware that it was still live and listening, asked Brown whether he should say something about Proposition 6. Brown said Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford had come out against it, opposition to it would bring Carter his biggest applause, and a statement against it would be perfectly safe. Carter rushed back to the microphone and was heard to say, "I also want to ask everybody to vote against Proposition 6. Everybody go to work. Let's win, let's win!" Delighted reporters chortled over a tape recording of the exchange, perceiving that it would make Carter seem less than noble and cracking jokes about "Jimmy's profile in courage."

Flying to New York for a rally in support of Governor Hugh Carey, Jody Powell told reporters that there were no plans for Carter to meet Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Carter met Begin after the rally, in company with Carey. It turned out that Powell knew before he and Carter left Washington that the President had sent word to Begin through Secretary of State Cyrus Vance that a meeting would be welcome. The encounter didn't do Carter any harm but it and the surprise were arranged mostly to get Carey credit with Jewish voters. "That little Carey-Begin love-in," a White House official later called it. Carter astonished reporters and his own staff when he disclosed in Miami that he had persuaded President Sadat to keep his Egyptian treaty negotiators in Washington instead of calling them back to Cairo during a temporary stalemate in their dealings with the Israeli delegation. Carter's language indicated that he'd been in personal telephone contact with Sadat. Actually they had communicated indirectly through the Department of State. Small things, these

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and a few others like them, but they chipped just a little at Carter's credibility with journalists and presumably with anybody else who took notice.

Making a difference involved something more concrete than Carter's appearances and rhetoric, including his appearances at party fund-raisers. It involved the quiet raising of money for specific candidates and purposes by White House and Democratic National Committee officials. For instance the President's son Chip, who is on the DNC staff at $26,000 a year, campaigned in New Hampshire for Democratic gubernatorial candidate Hugh Gallen and returned to Washington with word that Gallen, an early Carter supporter for the presidency, had a chance to defeat conservative Republican Governor Meldrim Thomson. Between $25,000 and $30,000 was raised for Gallen and it paid off. He won. White House and DNC officials thought that Hugh Carey should spend some last-minute money on get-out-the-vote telephone banks in New York City. Carey and his campaign consultant, David Garth, preferred to spend the available funds elsewhere on other things. White House and DNC officials raised around $50,000 and financed the telephone operation.

At a post-election news briefing and analysis by five anonymous Carter campaign biggies, the Carey and Gallen victories were the only two for which the party and administration spokesmen took explicit credit. They disclaimed any responsibility for the Democratic losses. The briefers' central claim and message were interesting. They argued that when victories and losses were balanced out, the total outcome demonstrated that the electorate was in tune with Carter. Therefore, they said, their Jimmy was in good shape for 1980.

John Osborne

On the Hill.

Under Siege

The first indication that all is not well in the office of Herman Talmadge, the Democratic senator from Georgia, comes at the main entrance. It is closed. Most doors to congressional suites are opened wide, to welcome tourists and facilitate traffic. Presumably there are other reasons for keeping the main door

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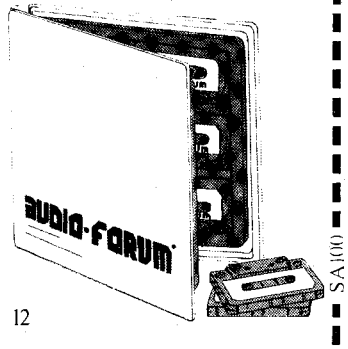

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closed; but the number of unwelcome visitors to Talmadge's office has risen dramatically over the last several months. The steady arrival of reporters, auditors and ethics investigators through his door began last May and continues unabated.

Before then, Talmadge had been making the most of his 22-year seniority in the Senate. As chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee and next in line to Russell Long on the Finance Committee, his influence among his colleagues had grown. His reputation was further enhanced in the summer of 1973, when as a member of the Senate Watergate Committee he proved a capable interrogator and, at times, an impassioned bible-thumper.

Since the late spring a wide-ranging probe by the Senate Ethics Committee and a few investigative reporters has turned up serious allegations of wrongdoing that could cost Talmadge his job. Carl Eardley, counsel to the ethics panel, has recommended a full-scale investigation of Talmadge, the first such inquiry since the one that resulted in censure of Senator Thomas Dodd in 1967.

Most of the accusations concern Talmadge's misuse of office expense account funds. After a reporter for *The Washington Star* first found discrepancies in the office accounts, later confirmed by an official audit, Talmadge was forced to repay $37,125 to the federal treasury. But he blamed "staff errors" for making this necessary. Then a former administrative assistant to Talmadge, Daniel Minchew, revealed to Senate investigators that he had opened a "secret campaign bank account" at the Riggs National Bank in Washington, with the senator's approval, in which he kept illegal campaign contributions and falsely claimed office expenses totalling almost $40,000. Talmadge has denied any knowledge of the account and has accused his former administrative assistant of acting "totally without my knowledge or consent" in opening the account. The accusations have flown back and forth. Minchew has testified several times before Senate investigators and has told his story to reporters, while Talmadge has been equally vigorous in responding to the charges in speeches and statements.

The misuse of expense account funds has been the central part of the ethics investigation, but several other potential scandals appeared as Talmadge's troubles drew him to the attention of the investigative vultures. The revelations included a charge—which Talmadge admitted—that he regularly accepted cash gifts from constituents and kept them for personal use. It seems that Talmadge operates entirely with cash, and has not written a check for many years, preferring to use the cash he gets from loans and gifts. There also were reports that Talmadge had profited from a land sale in Georgia which was engineered with inside information about government highway construction plans.

Talmadge's ex-wife, Betty, has added to his burdens. She claims that she—not Herman, who divorced her last year—had rights to the land where the highway was built. She also embarrassed him by running (unsuccessfully) for a Georgia Democratic congressional nomination, and dividing their friends in the process. The wife problem has added to the kinship felt throughout the summer between Talmadge and Massachusetts Senator Edward Brooke, whose financial difficulties helped to lose him his seat last week. It was Brooke's ex-wife and daughters who first accused him of having withheld pertinent financial information from his divorce proceedings. Those charges first surfaced in *The Boston Globe*, where the Brooke children had taken their case, and as the headlines fueled his political troubles, Brooke, like Talmadge, accused the press of hounding him. On election morning last Tuesday, before it was known that Brooke had lost his reelection bid, one Talmadge aide observed that Brooke had been victimized, undeservedly, by a vicious press corps. "I can empathize," he said.

The extent to which this investigation has occupied the time of Talmadge's office staff may be unprecedented. During the Dodd investigation newspapers took a less active role in investigating allegations directly. The mood in Talmadge's first-floor office in the Russell Office Building—named for his late Georgia colleague, Richard Russell—seems subdued, but as his receptionist explains, it's the calm after the storm, and before the next one.

Talmadge, oddly enough, has been the one least affected by the investigation. The senator's staff touts his achievements on conference committees and the Senate floor during those final days and nights of the last session, and repeatedly mentions the senator's heavy speaking schedule throughout Georgia during the last month—even though his next race for reelection is not until 1980. The picture one aide draws of him is of an honest man whose time—precious to his constituents—is being wasted by memory-scratching queries from reporters more concerned about headlines than about fairness.

Gordon Roberts, Talmadge's press secretary and

Coming:
Two Cheers for
Meddlesome Bureaucrats!
by Nick Kotz and Steven Kelman

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adviser, is an easygoing Georgian who has been with Talmadge since 1962. It has been his job to field all inquiries concerning the scandal, and it's a job he bitterly resents.

"You know, if it weren't for *New York Times v. Sullivan*, we could be making a lot of money around here," he said, referring to the 1964 Supreme Court ruling that severely limits the ability of public officials to sue newspapers for libel. "A lot of reporters think that the first amendment is a license to libel, and they're right." He cited story after story in which, he said, reporters have clearly neglected the facts of the case. "Solzhenitsyn was right," he said. "We live in a tyranny of the news media."

"There are only two people I ought to be responding to," he said, "and that's the Justice Department and the Ethics Committee. But I get all these calls, asking us loads of questions about everything, and it takes hours to respond to them, days. Should I tell the press to go to hell? I'd like to." When asked about how much time he and his staff spend working on the investigation instead of traditional Senate duties, Roberts launched into a 20-minute explanation of the charges against Talmadge, how they evolved and why they are wrong.

"It's a snowball effect, you know. These reporters call, and they say we have information on this and that. They don't say who told them or what they plan to do with it. I understand that they're protecting their sources. But you know, most of it's half-truth and innuendo."

Roberts asserted: "Talmadge paid for an audit from his own pocket, and he paid back what he owed the Senate out of his own pocket. The rest of these charges, the bank account, he didn't know anything about."

Four members of the senator's 30-person staff have been directly involved in the day-to-day aspects of the investigation: Rogers Wade, the senator's administrative assistant (and Daniel Minchew's replacement); Rita Hubler, his personal secretary; Gordon Roberts and Talmadge himself. "No one else in the staff has been affected at all, and the work's getting out on time," Roberts insists. Nevertheless, he bemoans his own backlog—"I've got a file on my desk that could choke a horse." Ordinarily, he said, he arrives at work around 7 a.m., but lately he gets there at 6 and stays an hour or two later in the evening. At the suggestion that the investigation has resulted in less effective constituent service or Senate performance, Roberts threatened to walk out of the inverview. "I don't mean to be contentious," he said, "but that implication is more than I need."

Lynn Murphy, a spokesman for the Senate Ethics Committee, said that Talmadge's staff has been "cooperative," but added that such investigations can't help but use up valuable staff time. "It's been a huge drain on us, so I'm sure it's been that way for them," she said.

After the committee report has been issued, and if the panel votes for a trial-like investigation of the Talmadge office-account scandal, even more time will be needed to handle the committee and the press. But it's doubtful that Talmadge would consider stepping aside, should such an investigation occur. His staff has remained loyal—only one person resigned since the first revelations—and Talmadge himself continues to attack the press in an effort to discredit the charges. "I do not intend to sit idly by and be vilified by a venomous press," he writes to constituents who correspond with him about the investigation. "I know that I have done nothing wrong." Besides his own hard-working staff, no one else is quite so sure.

David Blum

Today's Democrats are the governing wing of the Republican party.

Dank Victory

The Democratic Congress and the Democratic president have not covered themselves with glory in the past two years, yet even in a midterm election in which they have much lost ground to recover, the Republicans still make no real headway. The ineptness of this party has almost no parallel in history.

The Republican party can never put its finger on anything that really matters to the people. It hears a slogan chanted from the streets—"tax revolt"—and it thinks that it has found an issue. This staid conservative party can be propositioned by a bumper sticker. Any fly-by-night referendum, any straw-in-the-wind poll, any snap opinion in a shopping mall can convince it that it has heard the public voice. The party's leaders and candidates never sit down, when they imagine that they are hearing the voice of the people, and ask if they themselves feel like that. They think that the voters are even more stupid than they are, and rush to lead an army that evaporates at once when they urge it on, riding to disaster with the pennants that the host of voters already has let fall. It takes one second of thought to realize that there is not and cannot be a tax revolt. There may be a grumble; there may be an impatience. But there is no possible way that there can be a tax revolt in modern society. People today organize their lives around the government subsidies for which they pay by their taxes. They will not risk the subsidies to escape the taxes. Where the issue was put directly to

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the voters in this year's elections their response was very divided and confused.

So the Democratic party is still without any real opposition. Having sidestepped its way to another victory, it therefore is in deep trouble itself. Under the instructions of vulgarians from the "new right," or of the more sophisticated siren voices of "neo-conservatism," the Republican party has vacated so much ground that the Democratic party, sucked as if by the vacuum which any political party must abhor, moves haplessly and meaninglessly to occupy it. This is called "occupying the center"a phrase so sanctified by thoughtless use, by the repetition of parrot minds, that no one observes a simple fact: there is no center. When any party moves to "occupy the center," it pushes the supposed center in the opposite direction from which it is coming. The alleged center does not stay fixed, some no-man's-land between two entrenched positions. The center is where the advancing party has made enemy ground its own.

A left-wing party that moves to "occupy the center" is therefore by definition moving the whole political spectrum to the right. This is what has happened to the Democratic party in the last six years. The ineptitude of the Republicans has opened the Democratic party to candidates and to policies that might have made even Robert Taft pause. That is not all. Every move to the right by the Democrats "occupying the center" forces the Republicans back into still more right-wing positions than before. If the Democratic party moves to the right, it does not make the Republican party move to the left! It merely extends the territory of the right. This is exactly what is intended by conservative Democrats such as Henry Jackson and Ben Wattenberg, and perhaps they alone can be truly satisfied with this year's elections. Since the Republicans still show no sign of really breaking the Democratic hegemony, their solution is to make the Democrats the ruling conservative party.

This is the "credibility gap" in American politics: there is no longer a major party of the left. There is not even a major party that stands as firmly to "the left of center" as in the New Deal of Roosevelt or the Fair Deal of Truman or the Great Society of Johnson. Many consistent non-voters in America today are people who are in effect disenfranchised by the absence of a left-wing party. They are the disinherited who always find that the supposed center slides elusively to the right away from them. They always reach the fabled center too late, just as they always arrive too late in a fabled suburb. Always their next step up is to property that is deteriorating; always the party that should be theirs has moved away just as they have arrived.

Before the elections, the public opinion polls showed that a majority of those interviewed expect the Democrats to do the better job, even on what the Republicans might assume to be their issues. The Democrats are considered most likely to manage the economy well, to keep the peace, and generally to bestow sweetness and light on our day-to-day lives. Why was anyone surprised? The Democrats today are, so to speak, the governing wing of the Republican party. This is what has frustrated the Republicans all this year, made them gnash their teeth at the way the Democrats have "stolen" their issues. But the implications for the politics of the country run far deeper. The greatest democracy in the world is succumbing to one-party government of no real political conviction.

I believe that the distrust of America in the world now, of its firmness in foreign policy and its ability to manage its own economy, is in great part due to the belief that America has decided not to govern itself. Its politics have become so unideological that there is no real motive or will to govern, a fact which both the Congress and the president have demonstrated in their different ways during the past two years. A clearly demonstrable truth in democratic politics is that you cannot govern from a mythical center. The Democratic party's extension of this "center" to take in so much of the right, without any real belief in the policies of the right, has left it with no purpose for governing. There is a great deal of difference between a Republican party that governs from the right of center and a Democratic party that tries to govern from a "center" which it has moved to the right. The first has motive. The second has none.

But the more immediate political implications are equally serious. The conservative Democrats, such as Jackson, Moynihan, Wattenberg and Meaney, can claim to stand by traditional liberal policies: full employment, housing, health, social security. But the essential line between left and right cannot now be drawn on these issues. The fact of the matter is that reasonably well-off and reasonably secure workers still are condemned to a life of cultural and emotional poverty. Their children go to college and receive a caricature of an education which at the end looks like a hoax. The work of the vast majority of people is demeaning. Their leisure activities are a travesty of the human spirit. The Democratic party is able to move to the right with little resistance only because it ignores the fact that its popular support rests on a massive underclass of people who are barely

Next Week:

Anne Tyler on Susan Sontag.

Max Lerner on Eugene McCarthy.

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more than helots, whose vision of the possible good life for themselves and for their childen is perhaps even more depleted than that of the revolutionary working classes and peasantry of the past century and a half. The tranquilizers are administered, and the Democratic party copies its prescriptions for them from the recommendations of Mobil Oil, modified here and there for respectability. The meat-and-potato issues certainly ought to be the fundamental concerns of a left-wing party, but if they are its only concerns, it might as well run a welfare asylum for the intellectually and emotionally and spiritually crippled. Does the Democratic party's agenda go much farther?

The 95th Congress and the 39th president of the United States together have broken the Democratic party's tradition in this century of governing from the left of center. This is a genuinely significant development in the country's politics. It can only disenfranchise more and more of the people. It can only leave the Democrats more lethargically "governing" from a narrower and narrower base. It can only lead to a severe upheaval in the future. This is not one of Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s cyclical periods of quiescence. This is not a country turning naturally to the right under a right-wing party. It is a country being led by its left-wing party to jettison part of its political tradition. This abandonment by a "social democratic" party of its true purposes has never occurred in any democracy without there being the devil to pay in the end. The Democratic party is moving down a very dangerous road indeed.

Henry Fairlie

A visit with Trotsky's grandson.

The Day of the Ice Axe

The life and death of Leon Trotsky continue to be subjects of mystery and romance. What follows is part of an interview with Leon Trotsky's grandson, Esteban Volkow. Volkow was present when Trotsky was assassinated in his house in Mexico City on August 20, 1940. The interview took place in that house, where Volkow still lives. He is 53, is married with four daughters and works as a chemical researcher. He is a Mexican citizen and perceives himself as a Mexican native. The interviewer is Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, author of *Dopo Marx Aprile* (After Marx April), a memoir of her explusion last year from the Italian Communist party. These introductory notes are by Jack Beatty.

"The stuff of contemporary tragedy," Trotsky once wrote, "is found in the clash between the individual and the collective." In the course of his parabolic career he was on both sides of this conflict. Flushed with the Bolshevik triumph in 1917, he scorned the pleas of the Mensheviks for an "all democratic" government. "Your role is played out" he anathemized the Menshevik leader, Jules Martou. "Go where you belong—to the dustbin of history." Trotsky led the Red Army in the ensuing civil war and matched the White generals Deniken and Kolchack in brutality—ordering the shooting of prisoners, for example, and reverting to the primal Russian practice of taking civilian hostages. Stung by western criticism of his army's conduct, Trotsky replied that in war the end justifies the means and that the end was nothing less than the "preservation of the Worker's State." (Lenin, more honest, admitted that by 1920 Russia was a "degenerated worker's state.") Trotsky defended his use of terror in a pamphlet entitled, "Terrorism and Revolution," two words Trotsky helped make synonymous. The young Trotsky, in short, was somewhat different from the angelic old man his grandson remembers.

History punished Trotsky for his sins. In the aftermath of Lenin's illness and death, the obscure secretary of the Communist party, Joseph Stalin, began his ascent to power. Trotsky, Lenin's heir-apparent and designated successor, blocked Stalin's way. Slowly, carefully, through byzantine intrigue and modern bureaucratic manipulation, Stalin succeeded in isolating Trotsky in the party. Ostracism and exile followed. In 1938 Trotsky and his second wife, Natalya, were expelled from Russia. For the next eight years they were hounded from one European capital to another by the outcry of the local Stalinist-controlled Communist parties. Their European exile ended on

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December 19, 1936, when the Norwegian government, bowing to pressure from the Soviet Union, ordered their expulsion. They left Europe as the sole passengers of an oil tanker bound for Tampico, Mexico.

Trotsky's expulsion from Norway coincided with the first of Stalin's great purge trials, of which Trotsky—in absentia—was the chief defendant, charged with everything from plotting with the Gestapo to sabotaging tractors and blowing up dams. Now Trotsky had to defend himself against the din of defamation rising from Moscow and echoed by the Stalinist press and just plain fellow-travelers throughout the world. He had become the typical modern tragic hero: a lone individual pitted against a powerful collective.

In Mexico Trotsky's villa became a mecca for many American radicals and—an incongruous note—several American college boys volunteered to serve as his bodyguards. One of these young men, Sheldon Harte, may or may not have been a Stalinist agent as was later charged, but he was unquestionably an incompetent bodyguard. Trotsky, for example, once had to admonish him for handing over the keys to the front gate to a construction worker who had asked for them. The hapless Harte was guarding the gate the night of the first attempt on Trotsky's life.

Stalin had to destroy Trotsky because Trotsky, in a stream of pamphlets and speeches and books, kept demanding extradition to Russia so he could defend himself in a great public trial in front of the world press. Stalin could not allow this. Increasingly desperate, Stalin moved against Trotsky's family: Trotsky's son Serghei, ill in a Paris hospital, was beaten and probably poisoned by agents of the Russian political police, the infamous GPU. After a legal wrangle with Serghei's wife, Trotsky was awarded custody of Serghei's nephew, Sieva, the subject of the following interview.

There were two assassination attempts. Led by the Mexican painter David Siquerios, 20 heavily armed men overwhelmed the guards of Trotsky's run-down suburban villa near Mexico City on the morning of May 23, 1940. They went to Trotsky's bedroom—as if they had been given very detailed information about the villa—and fired into the room with pistols and machine guns. Natalya, who had heard them coming, flung herself across Trotsky and pulled him under the bed. Seventy-three bullets later were found imbedded in the bedroom wall. Miraculously, the Trotskys survived.

Having failed to take Trotsky by direct attack, the GPU now adopted a Trojan horse strategy. Sylvia Agelof, one of Trotsky's former secretaries, had been having an affair for several years with a man she had known in Paris as "Monard." After Sylvia returned to New York, this Monard reappeared, but under the new name of "Jacson." He explained that he had changed his name to avoid conscription into the Belgian army. Would Sylvia, he wondered, like to take a trip to Mexico? Sylvia would. She was a plain, earnest woman. Monard/Jacson was a dashing playboy. Naturally, Sylvia sought out Trotsky in Mexico. It was settled that she would work for him while Jacson finished his somewhat vague business in Mexico.

Jacson's real name was Ramon Mercador. He was a Catalan Spaniard who, it seems likely now, had been recruited into the GPU during the Spanish Civil War. Mercador/Jacson became a familiar visitor at the Trotsky villa, stopping frequently to pick up Sylvia and to run helpful little errands. The Trotskys, polite and grateful, invited him to tea on July 29, 1940. On August 17 he returned, dressed in a heavy winter suit carrying a raincoat over his arm. He claimed to be working up an article on French economics and said he needed Trotsky's help. The visit was a trial run.

Jacson came to the villa once more—on August 20. Trotsky was out in the courtyard feeding his rabbits. Mercador walked over and asked if they could discuss his article again. Reluctantly, Trotsky agreed. He went to his study, Mercador following with a raincoat over his arm. "Why are you carrying a raincoat in the sun?" Natalya asked him. "It might rain," he replied. Minutes later Natalya heard a "terrible heart-rending cry." She rushed to Trotsky's study. He was standing in the doorway, blood streaming down his face. Alone with Trotsky, Jacson had taken the ice axe from beneath his raincoat. "Closing my eyes," he later said, "I brought it down on his head with all my strength." Trotsky died 24 hours later of massive brain damage.

At his trial Mercador denied being an agent of the GPU; he was sentenced to 20 years and not believed. Released in 1969, he went first to Czechoslovakia and then to Moscow, where he was treated as a hero. He died last week in Havana, where he had gone for treatment of cancer. He was 54. His victim had been 60.

Maria Antonietta Macciocchi: *What do you remember about that day?*

Esteban Volkow: Above all, my grandfather stretched out on the dining room floor in the arms of my grandmother, his face covered with blood. He looked at me and said to my grandmother: "Get Sieva out of here; he mustn't see this spectacle." So they took me into the library and I stayed there sitting and waiting, there, here, where I am right now. I had returned from school 15 minutes after the attack, which had taken place a little after six in the evening. Approaching the house I suddenly became aware that something serious had happened. Everyone was there, bodyguards, police. They were all very upset. On the floor, my grandfather was covered with blood. He was the most lucid of all and kept repeating to Joseph Hansen, one of the American bodyguards: "Tell the boys not to kill him." The boys were the other bodyguards: Charles Cornell and Harold

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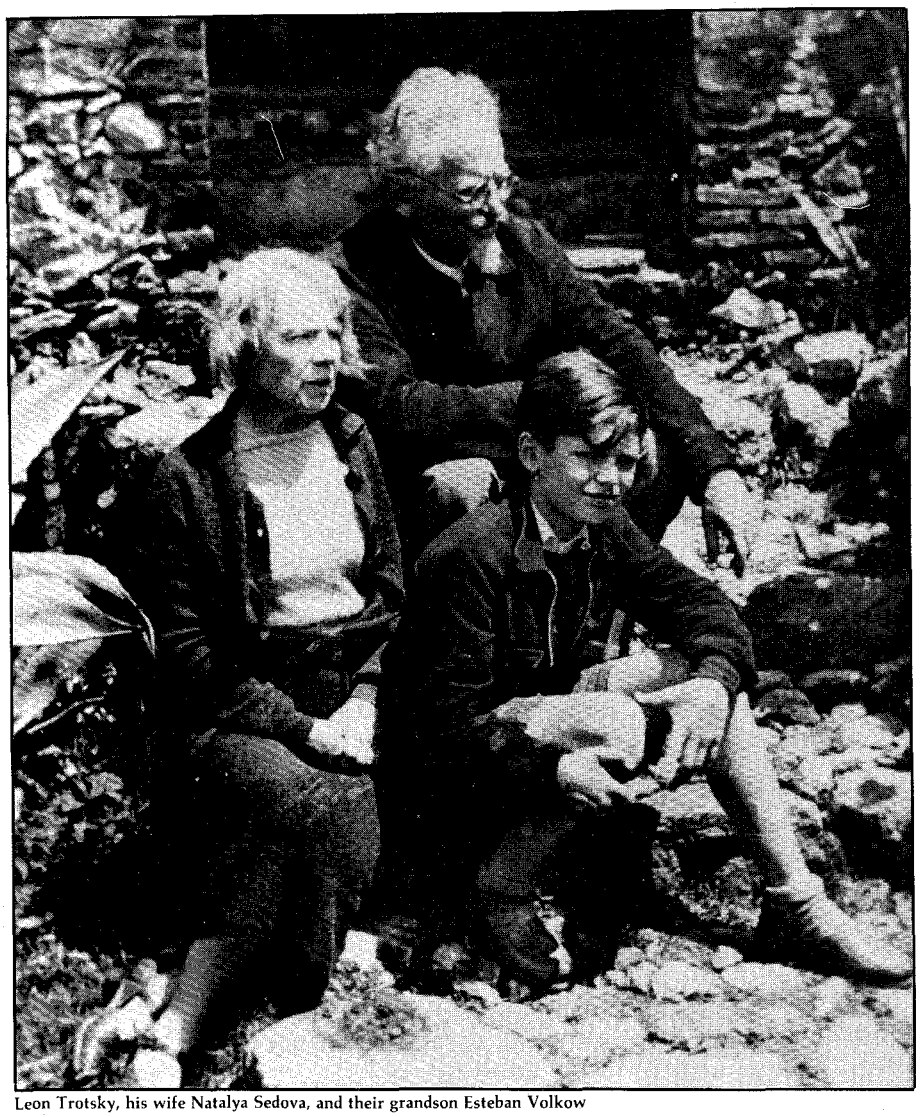

Leon Trotsky, his wife Natalya Sedova, and their grandson Esteban Volkow

Robins. They had immobilized Jacson; Robins had hit him violently on the head and they were continuing to beat him. Although they were armed, Robins, Cornell and Hansen had not fired a single shot at Jacson for fear of hitting Grandfather. Years later, my grandmother told me that the three had burst into the study after Grandfather's scream and that Hansen had yelled to Cornell and Robins: "Don't shoot! don't shoot! you might hit the old man!" They didn't call him Trotsky; they used to call him tenderly, "the old man," and he would call them affectionately, "boys."

But did you actually see the assassin?

Yes, the bodyguards were holding him down and he was struggling, moaning, whimpering without any dignity, like a rag. He had a gun in his hand; he had pulled it out after hitting Grandfather with the ice axe. Grandfather reacted quickly and, although he was wounded so seriously, he put up a furious struggle. I learned later that Jacson also had a knife on him. While I was in the study the police arrived and took him away. Then they took Grandfather to the hospital. I learned later from Grandmother that on the way to the hospital Grandfather kept repeating, "I feel like they really got me this time." Everything that happened after this I learned from Grandmother. Grandfather continued to be lucid. And when the nurse came up to shave his head for the operation he said jokingly: "I planned to go to the barbershop tomorrow; now I can cancel the appointment." He became less clear-headed when they were getting him ready for the operation. His sentences became confused. One moment he'd be talking about the future of the Fourth International, about his victory; the next, he'd say it was necessary to discover those who were responsible, necessary to show that Jacson had acted under Stalin's orders. Or he'd say: "Look what they've done to me," the same thing he said to Grandmother when she had run to him after the scream. Grandmother had found him at the entrance to the study, blood all over his face, without his eyeglasses, which had fallen off during the struggle, his arms limp against his body. "Look what they've done to me." When he was ready to go into the operating room where the operation was to be performed by five surgeons, he said to Grandmother; "I love you." After the operation, at 7:30 p.m., he went into a coma. Twenty-four hours later, at 7:30 p.m. the following day, he died.

Did you know Jacson?

Yes, but he really wasn't that much a part of the group around Grandfather, partly because Grandfather kept him at a distance. He'd hang around the house a lot under the pretext of seeing his wife, Sylvia Agelof, Grandfather's secretary. She was in love with Jacson, swindled by him, but an honest girl, a sincere Trotskyite. Jacson had made friends with the bodyguards and the others who worked in the house. He made himself useful to everyone: he'd loan out his car, take us for walks in the country. Once he took us all the way to Vera Cruz. He was almost affectionate with me. A kind of intimacy was born, the kind that exists between a 14-year-old boy and an adult who pays attention to him. We'd talk about sports, he'd give me little presents. Once he brought me some model airplanes. He was an expert mountaineer and used to tell me about his climbs with rope and ice axe.

Wasn't there anyone in the house who suspected him? What did Trotsky think of him?

Grandfather didn't like him and kept him at a distance. After seeing him for the first time, Grandfather said: "This character is really strange." Jacson passed himself off as a Belgian under the name of Jacques Monard. In fact, he'd always speak in French. One day I heard Grandfather say to Grandmother: "He doesn't seem French to me. His way of sitting down at the table isn't French. A strange character! A strange character!" But after awhile he got used to him. Frank Jacson's tactic (in reality he was a Catalan named Ramon Mercader) was to ingratiate himself by always being obliging and innocuous, always ready to help in the most humble of needs and always in the shadows. He was completely alone with Grandfather only two times. The first time was to ask him the favor of checking an article he had just written on French economics. The second time was to kill him with the ice axe. Grandfather did not want to refuse the courtesy to someone who had been so obliging to others and of so little bother to him personally. After correct-

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"Minimize the cost of electricity that's what our research is really try

Dr. Richard Balzhiser, Director for Fossil Fuels and Advanced Systems at the Electric Power Research Institu

Dr. Balzhiser among the array of mirrors that track the sun at U.S. Department of Energy's Sandia Labs solar thermal test facility in New Mexico.

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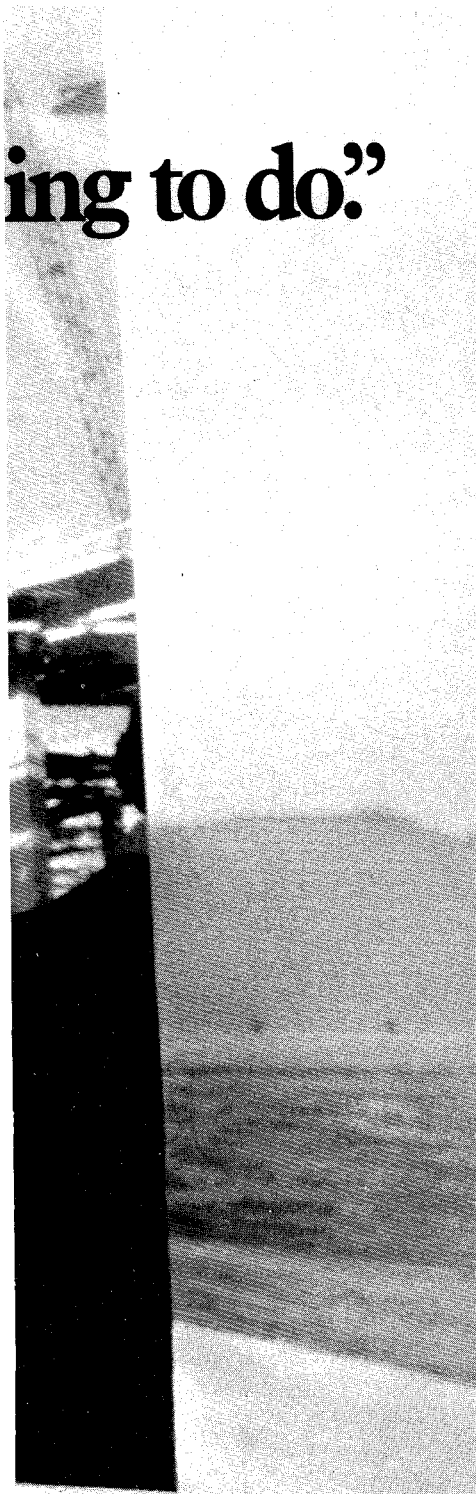
ing to do."



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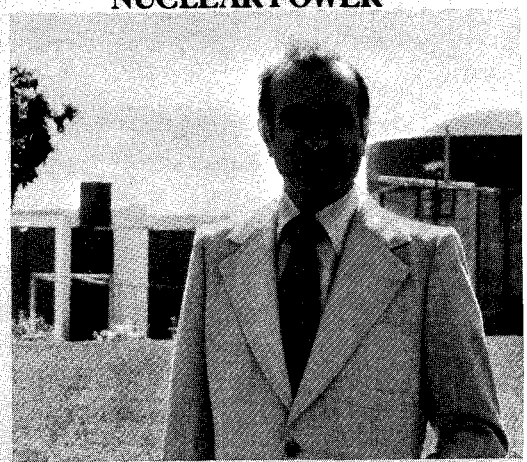
NUCLEAR POWER



Dr. Milton Levenson, Director for Nuclear Power at the Electric Power Research Institute.

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ing the article he agreed to check the new version. No one imagined that Jacson was an agent of the GPU and that he had managed to infiltrate into our ranks so as to murder Grandfather. Only after the assassination did we learn that the mother of Ramon Mercader, alias Jacques Monard, alias Frank Jacson, was a Spanish Communist and the lover of a general in the GPU, or that Jacson had even studied in Moscow in preparation for the assassination. Actually, his mother had a very important role in the crime. She had raised her son in an environment of hatred and fanaticism and he was morbidly attached to her. The day of the assassination she was waiting here in Mexico City to help him escape.

Weren't you also a witness to Siqueiros's previous assassination attempt a few months before, on May 23, 1940?

Yes. I certainly was. About 30 terrorists led by Siqueiros burst in at four o'clock in the morning. As you see, the house is all on one floor. One can get inside through the doors of the library, the study or my bedroom. My room was next to my grandparents' room. They burst out from these three doors firing like crazy with machine guns. Later it was estimated that they had fired 100 shots. Grandfather had gone to bed late and was sleeping deeply. He had worked late and Grandmother had given him a sedative. They both jumped out of bed and hid in this corner, flattening themselves on the floor and against the wall, Grandfather over Grandmother to protect her. The first bullets struck my bed. In fact, I was hit in the big toe. From my room they ran into my grandparents' without noticing that their bed was empty. It was still dark and the bed covers were in disarray. While they were firing into my grandparents' room, I fled into the garden. They kept on shooting; it seemed as though it would never end. Running out of the house, certain that they had killed Grandfather, they threw a grenade on my bed and it went up in flames. At a certain point during the shooting, I know I screamed: "Grandfather! Grandfather!" and I know I continued to scream later in the garden. It was by following those screams that my grandparents ran into my room where the bed was on fire and it was by following the streaks of blood that I left behind that they found me in the garden.

Was it after this that the sentry boxes were built, the windows blocked up with bricks, the doors substituted with these armored doors? And what about the electric alarm system, was it installed then?

Yes, but it was the others who wanted all of this, not Grandfather. To the contrary, he scoffed at it a bit. He was a man who faced danger with great indifference. He knew the mortal risk he was taking; he knew that sooner or later they would succeed in killing him. He just waited for the final blow. Right up to the end he didn't want to alter his way of working or studying—in short, his lifestyle. After Siqueiros's attempt he limited himself somewhat and no longer went out alone. He gave up his walks, his excursions into the country on Sundays when he took me along to look for cactus and tropical flowers.

Do you mean he knew the enemy might strike from within, might be hidden in these fortressed walls?

There was no real way out for him. He realized that the resources of an entire police state were mobilized so as to eliminate him. You know how they operate. The last incident only happened recently: the assassination of a Bulgarian dissident in England. A Russian agent stuck him with the poisoned tip of an umbrella. They could have always poisoned our food, blown up the house, killed us with machine guns as we left the house. In the case of Siqueiros's attempt, they entered after kidnapping Robert Sheldon Harte, the bodyguard who was stationed at the gate that day.

Do you remember anything about him?

Yes, he was a pleasant American, 25 years old, red, disheveled hair.

Valentin Campa's book and the declarations of Rafael Carrillo claim that Sheldon was actually a double-crosser, that he had disguised himself as a Trotskyite yet had warned Trotsky of the assassination.

Do they really say this? You see, the same old Stalinist version. It's interesting that they say this. Presenting Sheldon as an infiltrated agent was a typical diversion tactic of Siqueiros's men after the assassination attempt had failed. They were afraid of Stalin's reaction to the failure and they had to find the ideal justification: Sheldon, the enemy's agent, Sheldon, the traitor. Grandfather never allowed doubts about Sheldon's loyalty and sincerity to spread around. It was Grandfather who wanted the tombstone that you see in the garden today: "In memory of Robert Sheldon Harte 1915-1940, assassinated by Stalin." On June 21 Sheldon was found burned. After the attempt they took him away and, according to the testimony of one of Siqueiros's hired killers who had fled from the house where Sheldon was locked up, somewhere in the deserted countryside, they had tortured him before killing him. He tells of seeing Sheldon tied to a chair while they burned him with cigarette butts trying to make him sign a confession that he had organized the assassination attempt. He resisted torture for days on end and then they shot him for refusing to sign; they killed him and then burned him.

Did you see Losey's film?

No. I didn't want to see it. The discussions and disagreements we had when he was making the film were enough for me to understand his reluctance to accept the historical facts. We saw one another several times and I helped him a great deal but he always upheld his own version.

Your grandfather was not the only one who paid with his life. Would it upset you too much to speak of the others who died?

Yes, but it is necessary to tell, right from the beginning, how Stalin scientifically destroyed our family. It is necessary to speak of our martyrdom. It all began when Grandfather lost his Russian citizenship and was constrained to leave the country. In 1928, shortly after Grandfather's expulsion, my father, Platon Volkow, a member of the Communist party, was deported to Siberia with Man Nevelson, the husband of my Aunt Nina, my mother's sister. My mother, Zina, and my Aunt Nina were born from Grandfather's first marriage to Alexandra. From his marriage to Natalya Sedova were born two sons, Serghei and Lyova. I was two years old when my father was deported. I never saw him again. I don't even know if he's dead or alive today. I only know that if he is alive he would be between 75 and 80 years old. In January 1931 my mother obtained permission to leave the Soviet Union with me and to go to Turkey. We left, leaving my sister, born of my mother's first marriage, in Leningrad with Grandmother Alexandra. I never saw my sister again either. I only know that she too ended up in a concentration camp from which she later escaped. I only have one trace of her which I found in one of Pasternak's novels. I know she's alive but don't have the slightest idea where she is. Shortly after our departure from Russia, Aunt Nina died of tuberculosis. This loss, added to the

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grief of having been torn from her husband and having been forced to abandon her daughter, caused my mother deep anguish. She began to show signs of serious psychological depression. Grandfather convinced her to seek psychiatric care in Berlin where Uncle Lyova was living. Now she had to tear herself away from me too. I remained in Turkey and it was two years later, in January of 1933, that I was able to rejoin her in Berlin. One week after my arrival she committed suicide by putting her head in a gas oven. This happened just as Hitler's coup d'état was exploding all over Germany. Uncle Lyova was then forced to leave Berlin only to seek refuge in Paris. I was sent to Vienna where I remained until 1935, the year in which Grandmother Alexandra was deported to Siberia. Three months after Grandmother's deportation, on the first of June of that year, Uncle Serghei, who was working at the Technological Institute of Leningrad, was arrested and sent to a concentration camp where he finally died. From Vienna I was sent to live in Paris with Uncle Lyova and his second wife, Jeanne Martin. I remained with him until his death in 1938.

Was he also assassinated?

Without a doubt. Uncle Lyova had been operated on for appendicitis and the operation had gone perfectly. Then, all of a sudden, he got worse, went into a coma and died. His symptoms showed poisoning, but there was something else behind it because his body was all swollen and covered with bruises as though he had been beaten to death. It's clear: the clinic where he was hospitalized was under the control of Russian immigrants who worked for the GPU—all spies of Stalin. Shortly after, thanks to some friends in Paris who sent me some police reports of the Fifth District where we were living, I learned that the French police were watching our every move. The report even mentioned when I'd go to school or out to play or to get ice cream and with whom.

Was it after your Uncle Lyova's death that you went to live in Mexico with your grandfather?

Not immediately, even though Grandfather begged Jeanne, Uncle Lyova's widow, to send me to him. With everyone dead: Uncle Lyova, Uncle Serghei, my mother, my aunt and Grandmother Alexandra, Grandfather had only two loved ones left, me and Grandmother Natalya, with whom he had fled to Mexico. I was the only survivor, the only one who had managed to flee from the slaughter of his four children. Jeanne, however, had become very fond of me and she didn't want to let me go. Grandfather had to take recourse to French law so as to win his battle, and it took two court decisions to get me back. Marguerite and Alfred Rosmer, two old friends of Grandfather's, brought me to him. We arrived in New York by ship. In Mexico we had a marvelous reunion. Grandfather was a fantastic man: tender, affectionate, amusing. His strictness as a father—I say father because he treated me as a son; no, I was more than a son to him—was never lacking in a great sense of humor. When he'd call me Sieva or Sievieska there was such happiness in his voice. Living with him was like finding again, no, like finding for the first time, a joy which I had never known. He, Grandmother Natalya and I made up a family full of life. But it really isn't fair to say that the family consisted of just us three, because all those who were admitted there became a part of it: the Rosmers, for example, and the bodyguards Robert Sheldon Harte, Joseph Hansen, Charles Cornell, Harold Robins.

All American names?

All Americans. American Trotskyites. Most of the Trotskyites were American. Oh, there were German, French, Czech Trotskyites, but mostly Americans. American workers, volunteers, came spontaneously to protect Trotsky. Grandfather admired American workers very much. He used to say they were the best workers in the world, the most capable, efficient, tireless, the most organized. In fact he admired anyone who was proficient at manual work. For example, his close friendship with Melquiades Benitez, his Mexican bodyguard, was in part because Benitez knew how to do a little of everything, from making cages for the chickens and rabbits to joinery and installing electric alarm systems in the garden.

What else do you remember about life with your grandfather?

A constant coming and going. People who would even come from other countries but, I repeat, above all from the United States: workers, teachers, university instructors—all Trotskyites, naturally. And I remember constant discussions even at the table, after lunch, after dinner. Grandfather had the patience of a schoolteacher; he believed in the power of persuasion of the spoken word, and how he'd talk. In the morning the discussions interrupted late at night were taken up again, stubbornly and, oh, when he'd speak English. He spoke eight languages well, many learned in prison. For example, with me and even with Natalya, he'd always speak French. Russian had become like Chinese to me; I had completely forgotten it in Berlin and Vienna. Yes, Grandfather really liked English. He knew how to pun and tell anecdotes in English and he was always happy to speak it. I remember that he was very convincing especially when he was speaking. And yet he studied and wrote a great deal. Not only essays but books, like the one he was working on when he was killed. He kept in close correspondence with Trotskyites from all over the world: Spain, Norway, America. He also gave great importance to physical exercise. As soon as he'd get up, he'd do calisthenics and then he'd tend to his little project of breeding chickens and rabbits. He'd cut grass for the rabbits, prepare feed for the chickens. He was a whirl of activity, of vitality.

Did Trotsky ever encourage you to follow his path, to become involved in politics?

No, never. To the contrary, he always said to me, "You must not get involved in politics. Our family has paid enough to politics." And he'd repeat to his dearest friends: "Sieva must not follow my path; when he is grown up he must not concern himself with politics."

Did you obey him?

Yes. I chose to become a chemical engineer. While I was living with Grandmother Natalya in Mexico I took a degree in chemistry and engineering. After Grandfather's death, I stayed with Grandmother Natalya right here in the house where he was murdered. We took up our old rooms again: she, the room where she used to sleep with Grandfather on whose walls were the bullet holes which you see; and I, the room into which Siqueiros's killers burst in, shooting and setting my bed on fire. We left everything intact and decided to open the doors to anyone who wanted to visit. In 1961, with the help of the New Yorker, Walter Ketley, we turned it into a museum. I stayed in the museum after Grandmother Natalya's death. Her ashes are down in the garden next to Grandfather's. After my marriage to a Spanish woman, my four daughters were born here. Four years ago I gave up the house but not the custody of the museum. It's open to the public.

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on theater

Two Theaters

The American theater now must be seen as divided in two: subsidized and non-subsidized. This fact is particularly striking in New York, not just because it's still the theater capital but because New York has three theater venues: Broadway, Off Broadway, and Off Off Broadway. Of these three, only Broadway is still unsubsidized, excepting the occasional show from the Kennedy Center or the ones backed by some producer's tax-exempt foundation. Off Broadway is well mixed, subsidized and not. Off Off is pretty generally subsidized. The differences in financing have, of course, an overall effect on the kinds of work done.

On Broadway, almost always privately financed for possible profit, the situation is getting ludicrous. Two plays have just announced that their top weekend ticket is now $20. An incoming musical will match the weekend top of *The Act* last year, $25. This is not gouging: that new musical is expected to cost two million dollars before it opens on Broadway, and it's easily demonstrable that, proportionately, ticket prices have risen less than many other items. Broadway grosses are up, but like book publishing grosses which are also up, the figures don't reflect the depressing range and quality of the offerings. Think of how the financial facts must affect theatrical enterprise. How much freedom can any Broadway producer, however ambitious, afford to feel when he knows that a two-character, one-set play may cost him a quarter million to produce and must gross about a third of that sum every week just to stay open? Now, more singlemindedly than ever, a poor Broadway show must be seen as failed commerce, not failed art.

In the part of Off Broadway that is unsubsidized, private enterprise is now in a cleft stick. A knowledgeable person told me last week that a base cost for an OB production these days is about $100,000. Some productions that, in physical size and audience appeal, belong in small houses simply couldn't be profitable Off Broadway. An OB house must, by Equity contract, seat no more than 499 persons. At the current OB top, usually around $10, it's impossible to make out even with capacity sales, and the prices can't be raised at will because Equity's contractual concessions, as against Broadway terms, are tied to gross receipts. So the producer often has to put the small show in a large unsuitable house, often with unsuitable results.

None of the above is in crystalline distinction from subsidized work, the majority of productions in New York (much OB and most OOB) done by theater companies whose non-profit status and minimal two-year existence entitle them to apply for grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. Many of them also get grants from other foundations and gifts from individuals. But subsidy, in these inflationary days, doesn't mean the end of money troubles. Grants and gifts don't cover expenses, only—with luck—deficits. Money worries affect the work of subsidized theaters, too. OOB, at the lowest end of the grant scale, is still full of adventure, but as one goes up the scale, one senses more and more concern about keeping deficits down, keeping subscription lists up, and the resultant hit-consciousness. The wry truth is that, at the upper end of the non-profit scale, subsidy only guarantees that money worries will continue. The profit producer can produce or not, as he chooses, and can pocket the take if there is any. The non-profit theater *must* keep working, show after show, season after season, according to Foundation and Council guidelines, if it wants to keep getting grants and keep alive—to lose more money.

Still, though one certainly can't absolutely equate subsidized theater with work of high quality, the opportunity for good work is now becoming more and more the property of the non-profit theater—if only because the funding bodies still pay lip-service to quality and ask for evidence of it in grantees.

For that very reason, perhaps special credit should be given to non-subsidized work of merit, which means—and this may lie ahead—that critics ought to specify the type of financing for each play. In which case, then, special credit to José Ferrer, who has apparently spent his own money to present himself in a two-character play called *White Pelicans*, written and directed by Jay Broad. Ferrer did the play two seasons ago at Broad's subsidized theater in Huntington, Long Island, and has brought it, unsubsidized, to Off Broadway (Theater de Lys). In the last 38 years I've seen Ferrer many times on stage and screen and have rarely thought him even tolerable, so it's not enough to say that this is his best performance. It's good in itself—a remarkable display of non-display, continent, tacitly strong, full of quiet echoes. Ferrer is an old prospector about to leave Alaska after the gold rush of '98, broke but gnomically wiser. His quizzical performance is a big advance at a late stage, and it probably owes something to the writer-director.

Morgan Freeman, a black actor I've not seen before, plays the one other

Films Worth Seeing

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The Wiz. Nix on Diana Ross and the plentiful syrup, but most of the people are good and the physical production is a warm kitschy bath.

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character, another prospector going home broke, but bitter. Freeman too is very good, with real fierceness under everything from the openly fierce to the fearful. The two men meet in a shack where they wait for a steamer to take them out, but the setting tells us that the play is not realistic. David Chapman's design has no walls: only a raked platform with a white free-form bas-relief hanging in the back. The trouble is that the non-realism wobbles: the play seems to be symbolic, though unfocused, and it ends up fantastic.

In the shack is a giant iron-bound crate, weight two tons, owner unknown, which Ferrer thinks contains ore. It can't be opened, though Freeman tries at the end. That crate, in the same place with two bilked prospectors, promises symbolic irony, but the play doesn't develop clearly—in this mode or any other. What it does have, besides good acting and direction, is astringent, evocative dialogue, always trembling on the edge of revelation but never getting there. The very quality of that dialogue leads us to expect at least a stimulating ambiguity, some thematic depth either resolved or, at least, circumscribed, but the play dissolves into a mere "finish." At the last the old man goes into a sort of coma, and, as Freeman wraps him in a blanket to carry him aboard the steamer, he simply vanishes. It's just a portentous device tacked on to conclude a play that, inviting as its texture is, apparently had no conclusion in mind.

Ferrer made me think—intentionally, I assume—of Chaplin in *The Gold Rush*: derby, chesterfield, tie, and white shirt. But there is no clown about him. He sits, mostly, reading in his little stack of diaries. Sometimes the entries consist of one word for a day: "white" or "snow." All his reminiscences are about snow. Freeman, however, remembers the summers—the mud, the mules struggling and dying in the mud. The contrapuntal interplay is very good; but it leads nowhere.

No shortage of clues, though. The two men never mention their names, but in the program they are called Harry and Winston—which, put together, make the name of a well-known jeweller. There are other clues in the text, but even when they are "read," they don't redeem this intelligent disappointment.

The Lion Theater, OOB and subsidized, does production miracles with its grants. (At intermission, another OOB director said to me enthusiastically, "And they don't get any more money than anybody else!") Last January I wrote about *K*, the Lion piece based on Kafka elegantly directed by Garland Wright. Since then I've seen Lion's Jesse James show, which was lesser but had some production ingenuity, and since then Lion has moved from an abandoned airlines terminal to its own small theater on West 42 St., a nice house that needs a sloped floor. The opening production there is *Music-Hall Sidelights*, derived by Jack Heifner from Colette's book of the same name. It's done with sympathy for the material and without sentimentality about either the glamour or the grease of the music-hall world in which Colette worked for some years.

What Wright has wrought on that small stage—helped by John Arnone's settings, David James's costumes, and Francis Aronson's lighting—is beautiful. The central device is a set of near-white scrims (almost-transparent curtains), some of which are hung in the usual way, parallel to the proscenium, some of which are hung at right angles to the proscenium and are subdivided into sections. These scrims enable Wright to divide the stage into about nine cubicles, as needed, which not only give the small space great flexibility but also suggest chambers of the brain, of memory itself. Colette, played by Kathy Bates who gives the best performance, sits in front of these curtains much of the time, remembering, and is sometimes involved in scenes. The apt music by John McKinney was taped, but it's so adroitly managed that you can hardly believe it isn't being played live under a conductor's cues.

Very fine work, even though part of our astonishment is in seeing it in cramped quarters. But the subtitle is *A Theatrical Scrapbook*, and the piece lives up to it. There's no kind of dramatic progress. A series of memories, no matter how lovely, is only a series, not a theatrical event.

By now it's obvious that the Lion knows this. This company wants to do pictorial-balletic productions. Fine. Why shouldn't there be such a theater when it has design talents of this order? Still, two changes would help the Lion's (ostensible) esthetic. First, productions should be shorter and should omit intermissions. Two hours is too long for non-theater in the theater; and worse, *resuming*, after intermission, feels wrong.

Second, the actors aren't good enough. For example, the music-hall performers aren't credible as such, and the "ambiance of women," of which Colette speaks, is not created. No musk. (This was a concentratedly lesbian period in her life.) I suppose that Lion wants to create a permanent ensemble but, after three shows, I can't think that the present group is adequate to the aims.

Book Note. Apropos of Colette. Her music-hall life, along with everything before and after, is chronicled in *Belles Saisons: A Colette Scrapbook* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $15). At least one memorable picture in every double spread, selected by Robert Phelps who wrote the shrewd and loving commentary—and who 12 years ago arranged an autobiography called *Earthly Paradise* out of Colette's writings. *Belles Saisons* is a savory gift for any literate person, yourself included.

The Novelists

Iris Murdoch

Though Iris Murdoch has defined the highest art as that which reveals and honors the minute, "random" detail of the world, and reveals it together with a sense of its integrity, its unity and form, her own ambitious, disturbing, and eerily eccentric novels are stichomythic structures in which ideas, not things, and certainly not human beings, flourish. In the beginning *is* the Word.

There are many novels—*The Sea, The Sea* (Viking, $10.95) is the nineteenth—and many characters, and many wildly, at times frantically, inventive plots. There are perhaps hundreds of interiors, meticulously described; hundreds of costumes; and a small galaxy of observations about the quality of the air, the sun's setting or the sun's rising, the condition of London in the summer, or in the fall, or in the rainy winter or the bright misleading spring. There are

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innumerable "loves"—usually one dominant love to a novel, and satellite, subplot loves that mock or confirm the central love-obsession. There are characters who are "enchanters" (often self-deceived) and characters who are "enchanted," often disastrously. There are convoluted plots reminiscent of the worst of Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, and the most cheerfully muddled of Restoration comedies, in which the author operates, at times almost visibly, as a puppet-mistress alternately contemptuous of and moved by her characters' fates. There are defiantly tidy endings, as in *The Time of the Angels* and *The Italian Girl*, inferior works, and unresolved troubling, provocative endings, as in *A Word Child, The Sacred and Profane Love Machine, Henry and Cato* and *The Sea, The Sea*—loose, freer, more ribald, even rather buffoonish works that, while never experimental in a literary sense, are nevertheless not contained by the rigid theatrical structures and "unexpected" disclosures of a more conventional novelistic vision. There is a dizzying profusion, then, of characters, incidents, settings, "endings," so much so that even admirers of Murdoch's fiction often complain that they cannot remember a novel only a few days after having read it. (Indeed, the protagonist of *The Sea, The Sea*, a retired playwright and director who has achieved great fame in England, but who sees himself, correctly, as an egotist and a rapacious magician, is charged by a former admirer with having created nothing genuine, nothing of permanent value: Charles Arrowby is a master of dazzling ephemera, nothing more, and now that his power is fading he will soon be forgotten. Like Hilary Burde of *A Word Child* and, to some extent, the overly-prolific, death-haunted novelist Montague Small of *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, Arrowby must be speaking of matters with which Murdoch is personally concerned.)

Despite this multiplicity, this richness, however, the novels are not really difficult, so long as one reads them as structures in which ideas compete, as in a debate, or, when they are most successful, as in Greek tragedy, in which near-symmetrical, balanced forces war with one another. The question is never: which vision of the cosmos is most reasonable, most deserving of victory?—but, rather, which vision of the cosmos coincides with that of the gods? (By "gods" is meant simply the objective pattern of the universe, in which human subjectivity, and all the wishful stains of self, are dissolved.)

Murdoch's philosophical position is austere, classical, rigorously unromantic, and pessimistic. Not that pessimism precludes comedy: on the contrary, it is probably the basis of the comic spirit. Life after all is comic, not tragic. It is comic *because* it is not tragic—merely terrible. Nothing is so fascinating, so enigmatic, as the nature of the Good, and of Love, and Freedom: yet nothing is so elusive, and brings us to such muddles (to use a word that Murdoch employs often). There are even amusing Murdoch characters who realize that they are doomed to happiness and to the mediocrity that seems to imply, since the circumstances of their lives prevent them from continuing the quest for the nature of truth (Henry Marshalson, Bruno's son Miles). But suffering itself, in the context of pitiless self-examination, can masquerade as purification, and we are back where we've begun—no more enlightened than before. There is a marvelous moment at the end of Murdoch's essay "On 'God' and 'Good'" (in *The Sovereignty of Good*, 1970) when the author, after many pages of abstract, rather tortuous theorizing, suddenly changes tone: "At this point someone might say, all this is very well, the only difficulty is that none of it is true." And, consequently: "Perhaps indeed all is vanity, *all* is vanity, and there is no respectable intellectual way of protecting people from despair."

There is something noble about a philosopher's quixotic assumption that he or she is the person to protect others from despair; or, indeed, that others require protection from despair. But Murdoch's sense of her mission *is* noble, and in an era when some of our most articulate spokesmen routinely denigrate their own efforts it is good to be told, I think plausibly, that literature provides an education in how to picture and comprehend the human situation, and that for both the collective and individual *salvation* of the race, art is more important than anything else, and literature most important of all.

To a Platonist ideas are real. Iris Murdoch is, perhaps, not a Platonist—not quite. And yet in her novels ideas are far more "real" than they are in other contemporary novels; there are not very many of them, and they are clearly, almost too clearly, set forth. The basic idea seems to be that centuries of humanism have nourished an unrealistic conception of the powers of the will: we have gradually lost the vision of a reality separate from ourselves, and we have no adequate conception of original sin. Twentieth-century obsessions with the authority of the individual, the "existential" significance of subjectivity, are surely misguided, for the individual cannot be (as he thinks himself, proudly) a detached observer, free to invent or reimagine his life. *The Time of the Angels* is one of Murdoch's least plausible novels, but its mock existential Death-of-God concerns are illuminating. If there is no God, as Dostoyevsky said, is it possible that everything is permitted? Carl Fisher, the suicidal fallen priest of *The Time of the Angels*, once began a sermon by saying, "And what if I tell you there is no God?" and spends most of his time, and the reader's, in a quite literal fog, toying with ideas of freedom, nihilism, crime, and death. He is Murdoch's quite serious embodiment of the necessary consequences of fashionable godless Existentialism, and there are times when his thoughts, and even his language, echo those of Dostoyevsky's formidable Svidrigalov. The "death" of God has set His thoughts (or angels) free, and these thoughts are beyond our conception in their power. As Christianity dissolves, might it be that a great curtain will be

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raised at last, and, if so, what might be revealed behind. . . ? Carl Fisher commits suicide because his "black philosophy" is simply lifeless, and the ordinary world resumes its power: the London fog lifts. In *The Nice and the Good* it is observed that there are mysterious agencies of the mind, gaseous tentacles that can cause pain and mutilation: the ordinary person is naturally endowed with them, "just as he is endowed with the ghostly power of appearing in other people's dreams." These *eidola* projected from the mind can become autonomous, wandering freely in search of victims, unless, of course, they are stopped by the sacrificial act of one who is both good and at the same time disinterested. But since our original sin is, quite probably, our infatuation with self, so this expulsion of random, brute evil is extremely difficult: how does one transcend one's own self, without delusion?

In *The Sea, The Sea* Charles Arrowby's escape from London and his attempt to purge himself of egoism by writing his autobiography—near the appropriately-named village of Narrowdean—is a gesture that might seem laudable; yet it is fraught with risk, and eventually brings disaster upon himself and others, precisely because it is an artificial, and even subtly satanic, act. For Arrowby cannot help revising his life, even as he recounts it. Murdoch believes that the "inner" world is, in a sense, parasitic upon the "outer" world, and that love, far from being this redemptive, all-consuming force that sentimentalists consider it, is in fact the most dangerous of all delusions. It is bound up helplessly with egoism and personal fantasy, the "tissue of self-aggrandizing and consoling wishes and dreams which prevent one from seeing what there is outside one," and it is, fairly normally, too myopic, possessive, and "mechanical" to aid one in a realistic interpretation of the universe. Mankind is not free. There are few choices, few options, though daydreams and fantasies urge us to believe that there are many, and that the small, distorting window through which we view the world is not a fiction. It has been charged that Murdoch's characters are puppets and that they are jerked about from one improbable crisis to another, and perhaps in response to this Murdoch has had one of her most important spokesmen, Brendan, Cato's mentor in *Henry and Cato,* say that people *are* puppets—puppets in the hands of God. And what is God? "God is unimaginable and incomprehensible and nameless. *Dysphrastos* and *thaumastos.*"

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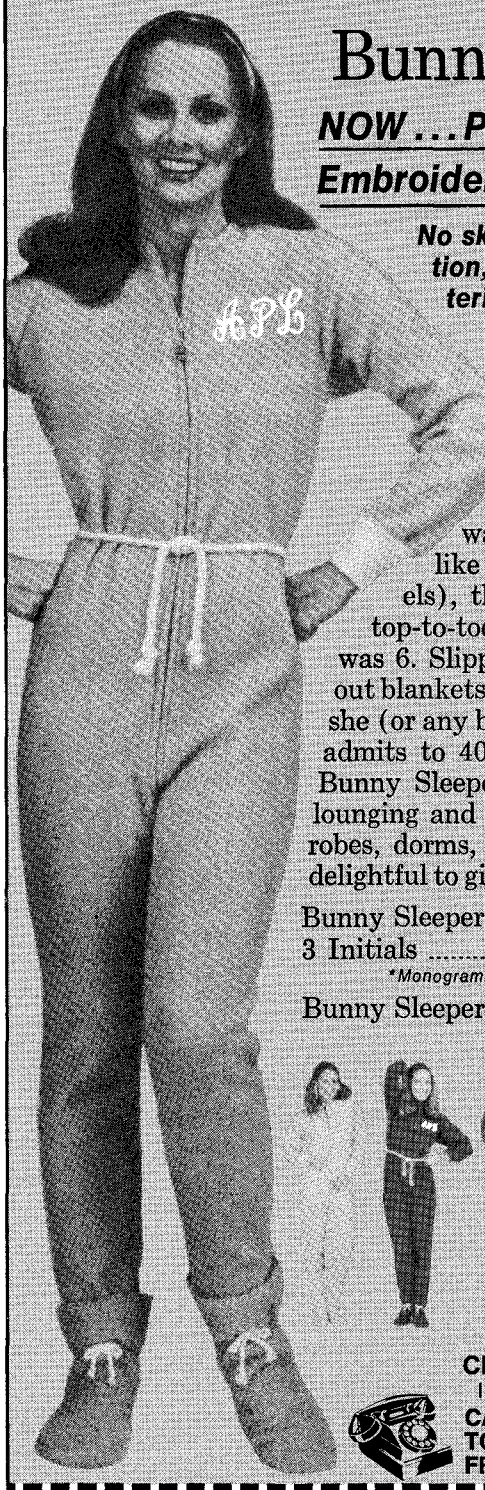

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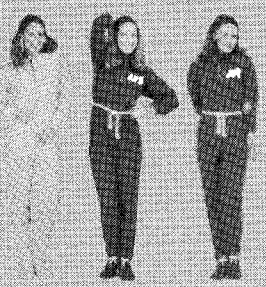

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Perhaps God is simply another fiction, however, and the various metaphysical substitutes—Reason, Science, History, Society, "Progress"—are false deities. One is left, then, with . . .

One is left with silly inconsequential but deeply absorbing plots. Emotions that feel "genuine" and "existential" enough but are, of course, illusions, sheer phantasmagoria. One is left with other people who are, whether they acknowledge it or not, involved in the same fruitless, albeit highly engrossing, quest. Their "ideas" make war upon one another: their "visions" are always in conflict. Charles Arrowby of *The Sea, The Sea* imagines himself the most rigorous of thinkers, shrewd, analytic, unsparing of self, yet he is seduced by a grotesquely sentimental—and, alas, not always convincing—notion of destiny: he meets the woman who was his first love, more than 40 years ago, and, though she is of course much changed, is in fact unattractive and not very bright, and terribly boring, he becomes obsessed with her, imagines that he is madly in love with her, and that is it his duty to rescue her from her dull, routinely unhappy marriage. (A device that Murdoch has used in the past, often more successfully: the imposing of the lover's vision of his love onto a real, unfortunate, rather bewildered victim. So Henry Marshalson of *Henry and Cato,* in a futile attempt to postpone his own ineludible destiny, talks himself into "falling in love" with and "wanting to marry" a very ordinary woman whom he imagined his dead brother loved; so Hilary in Burde and Lady Kitty of *A Word Child* enter passionately into a folie à deux that is fatal to Lady Kitty and comes near to destroying the self-important, imperious Hilary, the "word child," himself.)

The Sea, The Sea is intermittently brilliant, given life by those off-hand, gnomic, always provocative remarks—essays in miniature, really—that characterize Murdoch's novels, and give them their intelligence, their gravity, while the machinations of the plot threaten to dissipate all seriousness; but Charles Arrowby's obsessive, fantasizing concern with his old love Hartley, who rejected him at the age of 20 and married someone else, and who has become a comically inappropriate image of Young Love and Lost Innocence, is not made very convincing. Scene follows scene, the movement is maddeningly sluggish, one comes to feel that Murdoch is not going to *budge,* and that the strategy of a first-person narrator (so effective in *A Word Child*) was simply an error in *The Sea, The Sea.* Curiously, the novel is not very dramatic. There are a few awkward gestures toward gothic melodrama—Charles is terrified when a mirror is broken in his house, and a vase smashed; he believes he has seen a sea-serpent, and a dim "ghost"—but the "supernatural" is set aside for hundreds of pages, and some of the acts rather perfunctorily explained, so that Charles can concentrate upon his quixotic, doomed "love" for poor Hartley, the "Bearded Lady." There is a genuine accident—Hartley's adopted son Titus drowns in the sea; there is an attempted murder—Charles himself is pushed into the sea, not by Hartley's jealous husband, as he thinks, but by one of his "admirers" who, he comes to learn, has secretly detested him for years. But much of the novel is static, and Charles becomes unforgivably garrulous. He *is* a vain, self-important fool, and yet one resents being trapped inside his consciousness, however authentic it seems. And it is difficult not to think that the novel's conclusion—which involves the "supernatural" powers of Charles's envied cousin James, who has disciplined himself in Buddhist practices, and is evidently capable of committing a painless, bloodless suicide by exerting "just a little pressure of his mind upon his body," so that his consciousness is extinguished forever—is not part of another novel, another extended vision.

There are too many sketchy characters in *The Sea, The Sea,* the "fable" is not adequately linked to the "theme," and Murdoch is coming to depend upon a certain category of personage—Brendan of *Henry and Cato,* Willy Kost of *The Nice and the Good,* Arthur of *A Word Child,* Edgar of *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine,* Max Lejour of *The Unicorn,* Matthew of *An Accidental Man,* Marcus Fisher of *The Time of the Angels,* Nigel of *Bruno's Dream,* etc.—far too often, too glibly, in order to make her primary ideas explicit.

The employment of highly articulate characters is of course not an inevitable sign of a novel's failure; but in Murdoch these characters are used repeatedly; they are self-conscious gods-from-the-machine who "resolve" the protagonist's doubts by uttering certain gnomic observations, and then withdrawing. Murdoch makes an attempt to give them weight, to give some background—usually a "tragic" memory—but their essence is illusive and finally unreal because they are no more than the embodiment of ideas, and constitute, in a sense, the novelist's failure to communicate her theme on a deeper, less self-consciously verbal level; or perhaps it is an impatience with the formality of the novel itself. One has the typically dense Murdochian plot with its cast of highly idiosyncratic, colorful characters, and one has a kind of ongoing choral commentary on the plot and characters. When the story, the people, are convincingly imagined—as in *Henry and Cato,* surely one of the major achievements in fiction in recent years—one is not distracted by the commentary; when the story and its people are sketchily imagined, too obviously clownish to be worthy of our serious attention, the thematic statements, the Olympian utterances, fail to work entirely. We are told in novel after novel that people are "mechanical," that erotic love is a sort of "machine," that Goodness is "giving up power and acting upon the world negatively," that lusts and attachments compose the ordinary person's god, and that it is only by giving up such illusions that one can achieve freedom—but such remarks are only significant in terms of the specific images, the specific people (or illusions, perhaps) they seek to illuminate. Where ideas float about, inadequately embodied in narrative, they are often fascinating in themselves—and surely Murdoch is one of our most consistently intelligent, and rewarding, writers—but the danger is, of course, that they will come to seem increasingly perfunctory. One does not read *The Brothers Karamazov* to be told that "God is love," though Dostoyevsky might have imagined that that was his primary reason for writing it.

In *The Nice and the Good* a character who wants, like Charles Arrowby, to be *good,* states: ". . . In order to become good it may be necessary to imagine oneself good, and yet such imagining may also be the very thing which renders improvement impossible, either because of surreptitious complacency or because of . . . blasphemous infection . . . when goodness is thought about in the wrong way." A succinct commentary on the would-be Prospero Charles, who resorts to bullying, trickery, deception, and

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finally kidnapping in order to make his "love" realize that the two of them are bound together in an eternal bond. By his meddling Charles awakens a demon of some sort, sets into action the "deadly machine" that will lead to the drowning of Hartley's son, and brings about his loss of Hartley; but it is one of the more ingenious elements of the novel that, like the insufferable "accidental man" of the novel of that title, Charles Arrowby is himself unharmed. He hurts others, experiences pain and suffering, imagines himself "blessed," but returns to busy, superficial London and his old life; for life, Charles says, unlike art, "has an irritating way of bumping and limping on, undoing conversions, casting doubt on solutions, and generally illustrating the impossibility of living happily or virtuously ever after." At the novel's very end Charles has made a luncheon date with a 17-year-old virgin who wants to have his son; she is obviously deranged, but charmingly so, like the exasperating Kiki St. Loy of *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*. Charles notes that a Buddhist "demon casket" belonging to his late cousin James has fallen over, and its lid come off, and in all innocence he inquires: "Upon the demon-ridden pilgrimage of human life, what next I wonder?"

A witty conclusion to an uneven but provocative novel, and one that might appropriately conclude any of Murdoch's works. We are offered unanticipated moments of terrible, even tragic lucidity; we *are* purified by suffering; but our powerful revelations fade, our insights dissolve, and we are back in the world of appearances, of strife and desire and illusion. Given the opportunity to experience freedom we prefer to be, in the end, puppets of God. The work that is central to an understanding of Murdoch's oeuvre is Plato's allegory of the cave: I suggest that all of Murdoch's novels are commentaries on it.

Joyce Carol Oates

Joyce Carol Oates's most recent book is *Son of the Morning* (Vanguard).

Books Considered

Liberty and Union: The Crisis of Popular Government 1830-1890
by David Donald

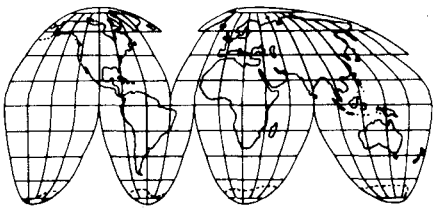
(Little, Brown; $12.50)

It is a cultural paradox of the modern world that while people around the globe have accorded broad respect to this country's literary achievements—Melville and Faulkner are read in New Delhi and Buenos Aires as well as in Paris and London—that "other" American prose form, the one that constitutes our historical literature, is widely neglected outside the United States. A paradox—in that both literary traditions take their essential sustenance from the circumstances of the American past, both assume they are probing among the raw materials of the human spirit and both seek to reveal human reality. Why then does one speak to the world while the other speaks only to itself?

The answer, unsurprisingly, lies in their respective premises. Our novelists, taking as their premise the condition of man—tormented, unfulfilled, endlessly striving—have produced a literature of American endurance under tragedy. In contrast, our historians, as guardians of the national covenant, have determined to find an explanation for our progress. Their song is one of celebration. The American tribe portrayed by our historians is triumphant, without tragic dimension. Those humans called Americans have somehow been spared the vicissitudes elsewhere afflicting the species. Two literatures, two Americas. A puzzle indeed.

For a number of reasons, the appearance of David Donald's *Liberty and Union* allows us to explore this paradox in many of its dimensions. First, his inquiry concerns the half century when an industrial society operating under the presumptions of liberal capitalism—what we now call "The American Way of Life"—came into being in the 19th century. The era's only rival in cultural significance was the Revolutionary period, when the initial political

Worldviews



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A World of Men:
The Private Sources of American Foreign Policy
by Lloyd S. Etheredge

Anthropologists have found that societies in which males are competitive and ambitious are more likely to go to war. From two coordinate studies, a random sample of the State Department and a comparison of the personalities and policy disagreements of American presidents and the secretaries of state since 1898, Lloyd Etheredge concludes that similar traits are a frequent source of American wars and hard-line foreign policy.
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Science, Sin, and Scholarship:
The Politics of Reverend Moon and the Unification Church
edited by Irving Louis Horowitz

"Fair and informative"—*The Kirkus Reviews*

Science, Sin, and Scholarship delves into the multifarious aspects and activities of the Moon movement—its metaphysics, politics, and sociology. Documents by Moon and an objective presentation of his theological views, as set forth in *The Divine Principle*, are included. So are extracts of testimony given before a House Subcommittee on the Korean lobby and transcripts from related court cases. But the heart of the book consists of articles by objective authorities that explore the religious sociology and the political theology of the Moon movement—the web is found to be far-flung and intricate, and the contributors follow its various strands to some unexpected connections.
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parameters of the nation took form. Both eras have been variously and passionately interpreted ever since, for the one established the nation's political customs and the other altered those customs through the emergence of powerful new economic structures. The ongoing debate about their meaning has profound cultural importance, for the manner in which we view these eras determines which ideas attain sanction in American society and which ideas are rendered inadmissable. The stakes have never been small, and they are not small in our own time.

The second reason why *Liberty and Union* provides a unique test of contemporary historical literature is the identity of the author. David Donald is one of the nation's most honored historians. In a lifetime of dedicated inquiry, he has concerned himself with the anxious 50-year period when modern industrial America struggled to emerge into the glare of history. The most traumatic labor pains, immediately preceding the moment of birth, came with the Civil War, and Donald has devoted the better part of his scholarly life to an effort to understand and reveal that national agony. The new study is both based upon and is an extension of Donald's contribution to a two-volume general history published last year that has a cultural significance in its own right. That study, a cooperative effort of six distinguished historians brought out under the title *The Great Republic*, is perhaps the most highly publicized college-level history textbook published in recent years.

Because of this fortunate juxtaposition of a truly central historical period being examined by a distinguished contemporary practitioner of the craft, *Liberty and Union* may be viewed on two levels—as a study of the national experience and an excellent example of the mode of historical writing that has come to be traditional in American culture. The two have always been inextricably linked, for as the sanctioned custodians of the national covenant, American historians have always played an important, though generally unacknowledged, role in fashioning the political memory of the society itself. For these related reasons, *Liberty and Union* may be regarded as something of a cultural milestone. At issue is the birth of contemporary culture and how, within that culture, historians write about it.

Donald begins by crisply appraising the political legacy handed down to the Jacksonians by the generation of the founders. In the sprawling, underpopulated, decentralized republic of Thomas Jefferson, the federal government was irrelevant. "So insignificant was the work of the government in Washington," he summarizes, "that numerous congressmen resigned their offices or refused to stand for reelection, preferring instead to serve in the state legislatures, where the real issues before the country were being resolved." These sundry provincialisms of the early 19th century, which historians from Henry Adams onward have found fascinating but maddeningly difficult to harmonize, began to dissolve with the coming of the slavery controversy, an issue that had the sequential effect first of nationalizing politics and then of fracturing the nation.

In the presence of these divisive developments of the 1840s and 1850s, Donald's focus becomes more precise and his prose slows down. It was a time, seemingly, when the direction of the nation could be debated and shaped by the actions of individual men. For those who see societies in this way, it was the time of Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun and Daniel Webster, and the shape of the future hung in the balance. The arena of the struggle, the Senate of the United States, thus appears to be the centerpiece of the ongoing American democratic experiment, a place where the instruments of historical interpretation can properly be brought to bear.

Professor Donald's favorite among these antebellum men of politics is Daniel Webster. An exponent of practical statecraft from a region increasingly riven by anti-slavery sentiment, Webster strove to hold back the tides of ideology that threatened the rhythms of oratory in the Senate and, by extension, threatened the nation itself. The author's even-handed characterization of Webster speaks for itself: "that flawed giant, admirable even in his imperfections, who had a conservative's understanding that society is held together by shared sentiments, institutions and history."

Whatever this world was (and its general meaning as well as its specific components are still a matter of dispute among professional historians), it clearly began to come apart at mid-century. The disintegration of the newly-fashionable ways of senatorial decision-making destroyed Daniel Webster's hopes for the presidency and, eventually, his political relevance even in his home state of Massachusetts. He became an anachronism, a result Mr. Donald does not celebrate. For the passing of Webster's world made the nation, with its sundry provincialisms, impossible to broker.

And the war came.

Unwelcome midwife—onrushing, officious, responding to momentums generated elsewhere, full of clumsy purposefulness and surprises and, after all the agony, yielding, for Donald, something less than promised: infantile political mischief in the Reconstruction South.

However totally post-Civil War America had removed itself from the manageability and grace of Daniel Webster's antebellum Senate, *Liberty and Union* is not a work of nostalgic homage to a lost Eden of American statesmanship. Nor is it a tragedy. Though the war is traced at great length, 85 pages being devoted to its details, there is more harmony than divisiveness to be seen in the structure of these details. In contrast, the essence of the Reconstruction experiment—the day-to-day life in the new South of multi-racial citizenship—receives only three pages of attention at the end of a chapter focused, once again, upon the United States Congress.

But the parliamentary world of Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens is clearly not as appealing to the author as the Congress of Webster and Clay. The author views the proceedings from an immense psychological distance; the prose is flat and emotionless. Black Americans, somewhat off-stage through all this, occasionally intrude as an abstraction, as in: "The postwar period was one of low political morality and there was no reason to expect that newly enfranchised blacks would prove any less attracted by the profits of politics than anybody else." Good-humored disdain there clearly is—but not tragedy. The long pent-up hopes of the freedmen and their desperate efforts to acquire the land and education to

"'THERE ARE TOO FREE LUNCHES,' gloats the *Midweek Sun*, a paper in the San Francisco area, referring to a program under which local hospital cafeteria workers will be given one free meal a day. The program will cost $460,000."

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sustain those aspirations, are alluded to in a single paragraph. Donald's camera, already focused from afar, pivots once again to its primary reference point, the US Congress.

The warmth of the early pages returns with the end of Reconstruction and the final two chapters provide an urbane sample of the reigning American historical tradition. The America that enters the Gilded Age is, for Donald, a society that is back on the track. Normality—that is to say, progress—returns and the explanation is found in two phrases of description that serve as the chapter titles, "The American Compromise" and "Reconciliation." These phrases denote the return of what the author regards as Webster-like practicality. The American Compromise, like the British Constitution, is not an event but a series of vague adjustments that collectively connote a mood of liberty—and of union. "Union" is Donald's central term of description. It symbolizes nationalism, the controlling theme of the book. The American Compromise is at root an emotion, one particularly visible in Congress. "It embraces a whole series of loose, informal and frequently tacit understandings that by the end of the 1880s legitimated the broader role played by the national government and the extension of the national economy, but also protected the status and the local and regional economic interests. . . . The American compromise rested on a broad popular consensus, and it worked." In this manner consensus is declared rather than demonstrated evidentially.

The paradox thus stands rather starkly revealed. Unlike American novelists, American historians continue to have little to say to the embattled citizens of Buenos Aires or New Delhi. As *Liberty and Union* makes clear, the traditional perspective is intact in 1978. Secure in a society that works, Americans are indeed spared the vicissitudes elsewhere afflicting the species.

How can this be? Very simply—by leaving the American people out.

Taking the wartime period as an example, instead of bringing into view the terror of Union soldiers in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* or the half-mad turbulence of Faulkner's Confederates, Donald's camera, focused on Congress, is augmented by a second camera focused on the Army general staff. Since it is a Civil War, two more cameras are required, one to record the deliberations of the Confederate Congress, the other set up around General Lee's headquarters. With these four instruments, Donald portrays his Civil War. Unsurprisingly, he finds many similarities in the parliamentary debates, North and South, and in the handling of military command and logistics, North and South. These similarities, in fact, help provide an interpretive predicate for the postwar "American compromise."

Nor do the American people intrude when the guns have fallen silent, though given the abundance of evidence, they are not easily left out. We know, for example, that the agony attending mass industrialization, the degradation of native-born factory workers, the despair coursing through the teeming immigrant slums, all found historical expression in the great, doomed strikes of the 1870s and the 1880s. The parade of industrial defeat confined millions to cramped lives, year after year, decade after decade. At the same time, the ill-conceived, banker-inspired contraction of the currency after the Civil War similarly plunged agricultural America into decades of extreme privation. Indeed, the entire period spanned by the last two chapters of *Liberty and Union* is a time of continuing economic degradation, not only for millions of rural Americans in the mid-western granary and the southern cotton belt, but for millions more in industrial ghettos from New England to Chicago. Their dignified suffering and their desperate efforts at self-help have in recent years been recorded in considerable detail by such historians as Herbert Gutman, David Montgomery, David Brody, C. Vann Woodward, and Walter T. K. Nugent, among others. But the urban workers and rural agriculturalists are not privy to the "broad popular consensus" behind "the American Compromise" because, quite simply, they are not present in Mr. Donald's book.

The technique of removal is linguistic—of a kind that over the years has acquired a certain level of craftsmanship within the historical profession.

In *Liberty and Union*, the farmers and the workers who comprise the majority of Americans are subsumed in the "local and regional economic interests" that are protected within Mr. Donald's abstraction, "The American Compromise." Who and what are these interests? Morgan? Rockefeller? The Burlington Railroad? The author does not say. The lack of specificity about "interests" thus becomes a central building block of the author's "broad popular consensus."

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Sometimes the process of removal is more direct. The "Reconciliation" with which Donald ends his interpretation of sectional conflict sweeps black Americans off the stage of history.

Who is reconciled? There is convincing evidence (though Donald does not use it) that northern railroad impresarios, generally Republican, achieved a remarkably close relationship with ex-Confederates, generally Democratic, whom they appointed to sit on the boards of directors of their southern railroad subsidiaries. Similarly, northern mercantile houses generated a brisk business with the southern supply merchants who in these years asserted their suzerainty over the entire agricultural South through the exploitive crop lien system. Though it was economically wrongheaded for them to do so, even in terms of their own self-interest, all spokesmen for these "interests" were comfortably orthodox on "the money question." Unquestionably, an authentic reconciliation of "Gold Democrats" and "Gold Republicans" took place. But it is less clear how black Americans, consigned by the new arrangements to lives of peonage, were reconciled, or precisely how their white co-workers on the land in the South and West were noticeably enhanced by the new power relationships of the industrializing age. And the constant rumblings of impoverished northern workers, more significant actually than the spectacular strikes that punctuated these rumblings, do not seem to fill in a portrait of consensus and reconciliation.

It is in this context that the author's sympathetic characterization of Daniel Webster takes on its clearest meaning. For if Webster "had a conservative's understanding that society is held together by shared sentiments, institutions and history," these shared sentiments, *Liberty and Union* makes clear, are those of the nation's economic and political managers. The sentiments of all others are beyond the confines necessary to "popular consensus."

The subtitle of Mr. Donald's book is "The Crisis of Popular Government, 1830-1890." It serves as a proper irony. Indeed, the reigning tradition of American historical literature is grounded in this irony. "Crises" are perceived when they are crises of the leadership class in charge of the American democratic experiment. All other crises happen off-stage. The occur somewhere beyond, below, or outside of "progress."

By this mode of reasoning, "consensus" comes to be a term that applies to culturally sanctioned groups and institutions. The United States Congress houses both. There, sanctioned "economic interests" and sanctioned political spokesmen harmonize their sundry aims. The result is described as "democracy" or, in Mr. Donald's phrase, "popular government." Those who don't participate in this mode of decision-making are free to avoid "politics" entirely.

Indeed, this is precisely what has happened to half of the American electorate in the years since reconciliation and compromise.

The contemporary evidence of mass resignation, with its enormous implications concerning the health of American society and the range and vitality of the culture itself, continues to be a fulcrum of modern American poetry and fiction. Though the phenomenon of mass alienation is no more an anomaly today then when Dreiser, Eliot, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Steinbeck began to explore its literary uses more than a half-century ago, this massive social raw material is not the stuff of the reigning historical tradition.

True, many historians do not participate in this tradition and a significant number will take issue with *Liberty and Union*. But (the ironies do, indeed, abound) it is now fashionable to cite these criticisms of the historical mainstream as proof that no mainstream exists other than a variegated "pluralism." Such a comfortable conclusion, however, constitutes an intellectual error of the first rank; traditional cultural signals emanating from the historical mainstream contine to be a rigidly constricting influence upon the shape of contemporary politics and culture. While five percent or so of the American young will read Melville, or Faulkner, almost all of them will read the celebratory textbooks that are standard in high school and college and all of them will digest the televised versions available. Obscure scholarly journals may on occasion exhibit a measure of "pluralism" but the parameters of the culture itself are unmistakeably defined by the traditional mainstream.

That mainstream is Mr. Donald's country. *Liberty and Union* may therefore best be understood as evidence of a mode of legitimization. To all those who would inquire as to how a particular method of cultural sanctioning developed in America—how, for example, the words "democracy" and "popular government" have undergone such a sobering linguistic transformation over time—*Liberty and Union* provides abundant evidence of the alterations that have occurred since the advent of the corporate state. Today, four generations after the ascendancy of corporate America, the longings of the American people cannot be addressed within these narrowly redefined limits of "popular government." Such is the current state of the republic.

Lawrence Goodwyn

Lawrence Goodwyn is the author of *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (Oxford University Press), which was nominated for the National Book Award in 1977.

Fools Die
by Mario Puzo

(Putman; $12.50)

Fools Die is a big bad book; it is boring; it is in large part illiterate; and it reads as if it were the product of an empty brain, an empty heart, and an empty soul. (Maybe the movie will be better.)

In spite of the fact that it is a publishing event (though hardly a literary one), I thought at first that there was little point in reviewing *Fools Die:* Puzo's latest novel was not, after all, so pernicious as to be dangerous to anybody's emotional or mental health—the worst it could do was put readers to sleep. Then I met a lot of sleepy readers who berated themselves for finding *Fools Die* tedious and labored and no fun at all. Literate people who'd read and admired his early novel, *The Fortunate Pilgrim,* felt that perhaps they were short-changing Puzo; they had a kind of "maybe-the-emperor - have - clothes - but - we're-too-short-sighted-or-jaded-to-to-see-

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them" attitude. People who'd found *The Godfather* (the movie, that is) lively and gorgeous and brilliant—masterful, in fact—were obliged to admit that *Fools Die* was wooden, inert, implausible—awful, in fact. The disturbing thing, however, was that so many readers were as tentative and apologetic as if they were betraying Puzo. One female critic, for example, adopting a strangely protective attitude toward Puzo, implored me not to take a "cheap shot" at Mr. Puzo for his sexism: "He's a kind of gross innocent, he doesn't know any better," she said, as if ignorance were not only an excuse but a virtue. An otherwise acerbic male writer entered this lame defense: "*I'm* not interested in the machinery and technicalities of gambling, but thousands of people are, or Puzo wouldn't have written about gambling—even though he's succeeded in making Las Vegas sound like the dullest place in the world to me . . . but that's probably my fault." So it went, forcing me to the conclusion that while the content of *Fools Die* might not be pernicious, the effect of *Fools Die* certainly was: intelligent and self-confident readers were allowing their judgment to be perverted by expectation, or by hype.

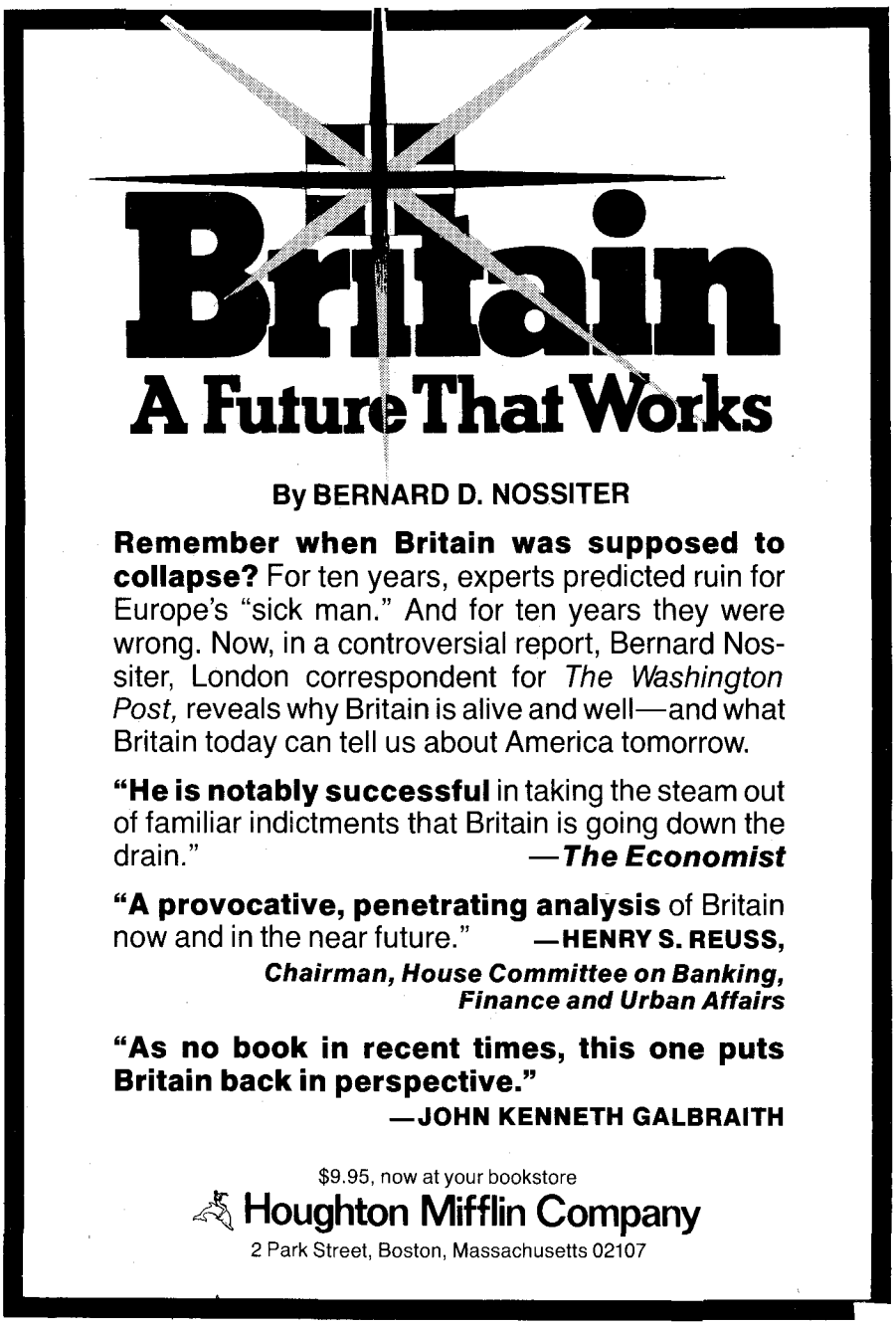
I don't know what there is about Puzo—or the Puzo persona, or the Puzo myth—that inclines tough-minded readers to say, "Well, it's a rotten book . . . but he's probably a nice man anyway." Of course whether or not Puzo is a nice or a charming man couldn't matter less; it's the work that counts, and *Fools Die* is, damn it, a rotten book—so here goes!

The events loosely strung together in this 572-page book are meant to dramatize ambition, power, and corruption. I say *meant to* because Puzo, through the offices of his narrator John Merlyn, keeps reminding the reader that these are his themes, as if we might otherwise forget; and, indeed, because of the apparent acedia of the writer, we might very well make the assumption that the point of *Fools Die* was to embody (not illuminate) the futility of human endeavor. Five hundred seventy-two pages of futility (*not* tragedy) are deadening, especially when the *dramatis personae* are sadly lacking in drama: potentially intriguing characters and situations pop up all over the vast bleak landscape of *Fools Die* only—as soon as they whet our interest—to be put out of play. Puzo literally has to kill his characters off because he doesn't know what to do with them; and stories peter out, go nowhere. (Puzo's justification for the decimation of his characters is more contrived than convincing: "Only those we most love can cause our death, and only of them we must beware. . . . Virtue is its own reward and fools are they who die.") Wet firecrackers.

Puzo shifts his characters from Las Vegas to Hollywood. He tells us what to expect through his alter-ego, Osano (more about Osano later; for now what you should know is that Osano is the surname of America's first "great Italian writer"; it sounds more like a Japanese television set to me, but never mind): "'I will make you feel the painful beauty of a child, the animal horniness of the male adolescent, the yearning suicidal moodiness of the young female. And then . . . show you how time turns man and woman around full circle, exchanged in body and soul [I have no idea what that means either]. . . . I will show you all the stretches of power. First the life of a poor struggling writer. Sensitive. Talented . . . a hustler . . . The crooked world and the classy literary world. . . . All this laced with plenty of sex . . . on to a full-blast ending in Hollywood with our hero gobbling up all its rewards, money, fame, beautiful women. And . . . how it all turns to ashes.'"

He's right about the ashes.

The story is seen through the eyes of John Merlyn, the Sensitive Talented writer; Merlyn introduces it in the words of Osano, a prolific celebrity writer who weaves his way through the entire novel. He really does weave: Osano has a peculiar lurching gait, one of the many characteristics that make it not at all difficult to guess at the identity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of the real-life counterpart of this paunchy writer with "sneaky green eyes" and six ex-wives who was once America's greatest novelist and who has become, in Merlyn's eyes, what Pauline Kael once called Norman Mailer—a bum.

Many readers find Merlyn's obsession with Osano the single most interesting thing in *Fools Die*. Assuming that Merlyn is Puzo and Osano is Mailer (which we have no right to assume, but that hasn't stopped anybody yet), I find Merlyn's obsession interesting too, but only in the way that trivial, ephemeral gossip is interesting.

Osano, according to Merlyn, is "crazy about women. That was his weakness, and he hated it." This is how Osano expresses his love for women, and his understanding of them: "Cunt is where it all begins and where it all ends. Cunt is the only thing worth living for. Everything else is a fake, a fraud, and just shit. . . . Without your cunts, you have no power at all. Men can live without affection, but not without sex. Women have to have affection and can do without sex." He obliges his women by "fucking their brains out," and by playing a game called "choke the chicken": it is his pleasure to throttle ex-wives till their faces turn black. When he really is enthralled by a woman, he throws her out of a second-story window . . . and offers that as proof to Merlyn that vulnerable women can kill a man.

Merlyn, on the other hand, is married to Vallie, who, along with his three kids, is his "sanctuary." He is faithful to poor dowdy cardboard Vallie until he isn't faithful to her—and we are given absolutely no reason why a man who has resisted all the blandishments and temptations of Las Vegas hookers and soft hustlers should suddenly, after years of determined sexual fidelity, fall for the arguable charms of a Hollywood starlet named Janelle. Janelle, Merlyn says, is "the straightest woman in Hollywood," by which he means she goes to bed only with people she likes, and only seldom in order to get parts. She likes more people than most of us will meet in a lifetime. But she doesn't feel guilty about her promiscuity, so in Merlyn's book (or Puzo's) she is "good," an "innocent."

I think we are meant to see Osano and Merlyn as polar opposites. Merlyn, with his wife and kids (and only one mistress) plays it safe, and regards himself as an honest observer. Osano, with his innumerable wives and mistresses, his syphilis and his yearning and hustling for the Nobel Prize, is one of life's fools: "Life was too much for him," Merlyn says; "But not for me. Only fools die. . . . We suffer for nothing. Our own death wish is our only real tragedy." (That, such as it is, is the message of *Fools Die*. I don't understand it, and I don't care.) Merlyn, by the time the novel lumbers to a close, is one of the few characters to remain alive; but he has no illusions: "I knew now the single fact that no matter how carefully I planned, no matter how cunning I was . . . I couldn't really win."

Whatever tension there is between the two men, both of whom play for high stakes in Las Vegas and in Hollywood (and therefore don't seem very different, one from the other, to me), it is dissipated by the constant snarling of the story line with subplots involving scams and cons, and by a cast of thousands—gambling moguls, Hollywood moguls, draft-evaders, and, predictably, Italian mobsters. None of these subplots or characters serves to make *Fools Die* seethe or teem or do whatever it is potboilers are supposed to do. The ingredients for a potboiler are here; Puzo can't make them work.

I've been unkind to *Fools Die*. But no less kind than Puzo is to Hollywood. And Hollywood, in Puzo's case, doesn't deserve the abuse he piles upon it: "Movies," Merlyn says, "can teach you very little. They couldn't plumb the depths of a character the way a novel could. . . . You could be the biggest asshole in the world and still make an interesting film." Tell it to Francis Ford Coppola. It is not a pretty irony that Puzo allows Merlyn to inveigh against the source of his own success. Altogether, I find *Fools Die* a nasty, self-indulgent piece of work—self-indulgent in that Puzo, who is apparently working out his own obsessions, trifles with his readers by not choosing to illuminate the nature of obsession for them. I think *he* got bored, finally.

(And if you don't believe a word I've said, just go to the bookstore and read page 315 of *Fools Die*. There you will find a "film review" by a minor character named Clara Ford, "the most brilliant critic in America." Clara Ford is clearly meant to be Pauline Kael. The "review" is so lacking in intelligence, and in syntax, that I can't imagine the *Hoboken News* having published it. If Puzo is going to attempt to imitate his betters, he at least ought to understand that they are his betters, and to have some respect for the word.)

Barbara Grizzuti Harrison

Barbara Grizzuti Harrison is the author of *Visions of Glory: A History and a Memory of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Simon & Schuster).

America's Dilemma: Jobs vs. Prices
by Alfred L. Malabre, Jr.

(Dodd Mead; $9.95)

"The country's unemployment problem is not as large as one may be led to believe, the problem of rapidly rising prices is a good deal more severe than one would imagine." In the gospel according to *The Wall Street Journal* as written by Alfred Malabre, one of its editors, this is the equivalent of the Sermon on the Mount.

The first part of the sermon is based on "much evidence of vast numbers of unfilled jobs" and jobs that are "difficult to fill simply because people disdain the work. . . . Take the case of domestic work. By recent count the number of household workers in the US is dropping sharply. . . . Yet the demand for household workers has risen steeply as more and more housewives have opted to go out and seek jobs . . . . [But] fewer and fewer people are willing in our egalitarian society to take on work that smacks of a menial and servant-like nature." The reader is reminded that the ratio of employment to the total population (the employment ratio) is going up and that in any case much of the unemployment is concentrated among women and young people, among whom welfare consequences are less severe.

The last two parts of this argument cannot be evaluated as a matter of technical economics since they hang on the moral judgment that a well-ordered economy does *not* have to provide work for everyone willing and able to work. It is a moral judgment with which I disagree. As for the vacancy part of the

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argument, it is simply without substance. There are always some job vacancies in the process of normal job turnover, but no evidence is presented that there is any substantial number of job vacancies over and above the number expected. At the moment we have six million officially unemployed workers, almost one million workers in government make-work programs, and several million more discouraged workers who have quit looking for work since they believe that none is available. I know of no serious study by either liberal or conservative economists that maintains that the number of job vacancies is equal to or larger than the number of unemployed, even if the workers were willing to be "menial and servant-like." We have a surplus of workers from the highest skill level (PhDs) to the lowest.

What of "inflation's dark side," the second part of Malabre's sermon? Malabre observes that the number of poor people went up in 1975 and recites the horrors of Germany in the 1920s. The latter plays the role of the Biblical descriptions of hell; the former has nothing to do with inflation. The increase in the 1975 poverty level was due to the 1974-75 recession and nine percent unemployment rates. If inflation caused poverty to increase, poverty would have increased in 1973 and 1974, the years of highest inflation, not in 1975. Nowhere in Malabre's analysis is there any mention of the fact that inflation is a zero-sum game. If someone's income is going down due to inflation, then someone else's income must be going up due to inflation. That is simply an algebraic necessity. All price increases go to someone. If you actually look at the distribution of economic resources (something that Malabre has not done), there has been surprisingly little change since the onset of stagflation. In 1972 the poorest 40 percent of the population had 13.7 percent of total income while the richest 40 percent had 69.5 percent. In 1977 the respective percentages were 13.8 and 69.6—no change at all. Inflation has added to and subtracted from each of our incomes, some individuals have undoubtedly won and lost, but there has been no general redistribution of income because of inflation.

God issued Ten Commandments; *The Wall Street Journal* contents itself with four: (1) Thou shalt cut government spending, especially that of state and local governments; (2) Thou shalt control the power of unions; (3) Thou shalt reduce the rate of growth of the money supply to four percent per year; and (4) Thou shalt avoid wage and price controls.

The diatribe against government spending goes so far that government spending gets blamed for price increases in which it has clearly played no role. "As government outlays have risen and caused inflationary pressures to build within the economy, it is no coincidence that costs of countless items have also tended to increase sharply, aggravating the price spiral. In recent years, for example, the average cost to American consumers of electricity has soared more than 50 percent." I would have thought that the price of electricity could more accurately have been traced to OPEC oil price hikes. Government spending is inflationary only if we are suffering from general aggregate demand inflation (a situation which existed in the late 1960s, but not in the mid-1970s) *and* if government does not raise taxes to cover its costs. As of the second quarter of 1978, state and local governments were running a surplus of $30 billion while the federal government was running a deficit of $25 billion, for a net government surplus of five billion dollars. Since the federal government was at the same time giving state and local governments $76 billion, simple bookkeeping maneuvers could have brought the state and local government surplus to zero and given the feds a five-billion-dollar surplus.

The unions have brought inflation through their advocacy of the minimum wage, setting their own wages too high, arguing for protection, and encouraging the government to spend. In this demonology there is no mention that unions are almost always joined by companies when they argue for protection—witness the steel industry—or that business pushes for many public expenditures—roads, defense, maritime subsidies, agricultural subsidies, etc. The minimum wage probably makes youth unemployment slightly higher than it otherwise would be, but it also lowers adult unemployment below what *it* otherwise would be. Eliminating the minimum wage would also not solve the youth unemployment problem, as this book implicitly maintains. There are simply too many million young people looking for work.

Unfortunately, commandments one and two are inconsistent with commandment three. Like all good conservatives, Malabre believes that monetary policies can and should control inflation. But if this is true, why worry about unions and government spending? After all, there is no necessary connection between unions or government spending and the rate of growth of the money supply. The Federal Reserve Board determines the latter. Therefore, it should take the blame. You cannot have it both ways. If the money supply is all that counts, then you cannot argue that unions or government spending are bringing the country to ruin. In fact, our dilemma is created by the fact that many prices are not endogenously determined in a market economy but are exogenously set by companies, unions, and foreign events. It is the problem of exogenously set prices (cost-push inflation if you will) that brings a recurring interest in incomes policies whenever inflation breaks out.

The deficiencies of the book are most obvious in the chapter on the fourth commandment. A very strong economic case can be made against wage and price controls on the grounds that they cannot be made to work in an economy as big and diverse as ours for any extended peacetime period. Yet Malabre fails to make this case and simply

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engages in ad hominem arguments. We are even told that "Adolph Hitler was an early advocate of wage-price regulation."

Nowhere does the author face up to the fact that our economy has privately indexed itself. De jure and de facto cost of living increases are widespread in the labor market and escalation clauses are almost universal in industrial contracts between firms. In a world of escalators and inflationary expectations, both monetary and fiscal policies lose much of their ability to moderate inflation. If inflation is running at seven percent this year, then all wages and prices go up by seven percent next year, but this leads to a seven percent rate of inflation next year and hence a seven percent wage and price hike in the year thereafter. Reducing the money supply in an indexed world raises the unemployment rate, but it has little impact on the rate of inflation. How do you stop inflation once it has started in a heavily indexed world where an expectation that next year's rate of inflation will be at least as high as this year's rate of inflation is a "rational" expectation?

There may be no workable solution. But if there is a solution, it must lie either in the direction of incomes policies to mitigate the propagation of last year's inflation or policies to stop price increases in particular industries (health care, etc.). If neither of these is possible, then it simply isn't possible to stop inflation without a recession or depression much sharper than anything we have experienced since the Great Depression.

Lester C. Thurow

Lester C. Thurow is a professor of economics and management at MIT and the author of *Generating Inequality* (Basic Books).

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Brief Reviews

Current Fiction

Wrinkles
by Charles Simmons
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux; $8.95)

People are born wrinkled, die wrinkled, and sometimes worry about wrinkles in between. This counterpoint of continuity and change underlies Charles Simmons's latest novel. A laconic and curiously detached narrator deftly maneuvers his way through 44 brief three-page chapters, each devoted to tracing a different motif through the childhood, middle age, and old age of one man, a nameless "he." Parents, a brother "who kept to himself and grunted while thinking," women, jokes, favorite objects, summer places and city houses, sex, religion, lies and hopes and more—are all quickly but closely surveyed and recorded in the past, present and future tense by the narrator suspended in time. The novel moves swiftly, and yet arrives nowhere, except back in childhood ready to set out on another strand of life; we glimpse the graphic details of a man's life, but never really feel intimate with him. Rather than suspense and strong emotion, there is a steady clarity throughout the book which reveals a flawed and undramatic life emerging from the collage of partial accounts.

When a young boy, "he studied the older boys and admired those he thought handsome, helpful, modest. He hoped to be like them, but when the time came he wasn't." He drifted into the army, after three days found it threatening and demeaning. Marriage soon out of the army was a disappointing failure, and he left a wife and two daughters for a series of troubled affairs. He works at writing novels, and "eventually he will understand that most people have as hard a time in life as he. He will try to make literature from this understanding but he will not be able to do it."

Simmons has, however, been able to construct an innovative novel from a clear understanding of the trying passage from birth toward death that his character undergoes along with everyone else. *Wrinkles* is not particularly ambitious or complex; but that may be fitting, for Simmons seems to say that life's span may not support great aspiration or deep questioning. At the end, the narrator reports of the character that "as he gets older he will sometimes try to inquire into his deepest wishes, hoping to find a weariness with life that would make death less fearsome, but can't."

A.H.

1985
by Anthony Burgess
(Little, Brown; $8.95)

1985 is a book of parts. Anthony Burgess takes George Orwell's *1984* to task in catechisms about the future, imaginary interviews, notes, and fragmentary essays, and then offers a short novel, his own version of what life in the middle of the next decade will be like. Burgess's basic criticisms are neither surprising nor subtle. That Orwell's future London was heavily based upon the London he knew in 1949 is well known. The class gap between Orwell and the workers he often wrote about undeniably existed, but Burgess's claim that that gap "could only be bridged by condescension," that Orwell was only capable either of romanticizing or despising the workers doesn't account for the intricacies of sentiment Orwell's protagonist, Winston Smith, bears for the proles. Burgess observes that in Newspeak "the term *freedom* can have no absolute, or political, meaning" and cites Big Brother's motto "freedom is slavery" as having "just that meaning," but Syme, describing his work on the 11th edition of the Newspeak Dictionary to Smith, accounts for that discrepancy early in the novel. Burgess's claim that the telescreen is no more a menace than a bugging device simply isn't true; the telescreen eliminates visual as well as aural privacy, and

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Winston's fears of being given away by a tic or an expression are vivid.

His more specific comments are of greater interest. How come the telescreen is working when the elevator, lacking electric power, isn't? Why, Burgess wonders, doesn't *The Times* appear as a wall-newspaper, thus eliminating the nuisance of collection and destruction of all those copies? By reminding us that "pleasure in cruelty is a sexual pleasure" he unveils Orwell's insensitivity to the relationship between pleasureless sex and violence. And Burgess's belief that *1984*'s major fictional weakness is the "insufficiency of conflict between an individual's view of love and the State's" is well-founded and suggestive, though part of what it suggests is that Orwell should have written quite a different book.

The second half of *1985* is a novel. The protagonist is Jones, not Smith; England is Tucland, not Airstrip One; holistic syndicalism threatens, not Big Brother and the Thought Police (a constabulary Burgess thinks highly improbable). Bev Jones's wife burns to death in a hospital because striking firemen refuse to answer the alarm; he is left with a retarded daughter, Bessie, and a huge ax to grind. He quits his union, and as a result is fired, unemployable (since all shops are closed shops), refused welfare, and later prosecuted as a criminal. A wealthy Arab brings Bessie into his harem, leaving Bev, who has resisted rehabilitation, free to spend his life fighting to reduce the power of unions. There are wonderful touches: a gang of toughs spout Latin and Greek as they pummel Bev (Tucland's useless members will have what Tucland deems useless, a classical education); a picture of a cancerous lung has replaced the Surgeon General's written warning on cigarette packs (a sign of our increasing numbness to language and dependence on visual images). Occasionally the prose sparkles. But the fiction is thin; a bunch of issues are discoursed upon by lifeless characters. And the issues, often bluntly expressed, are stale. Bev's call for punishment of bystanders who won't get involved is the minimally-rehashed Kitty Genovese case, and his crusade is studded with banal exclamations: "I'm a human being, not a bloody number," "closed shop is a fact of life," and "How can one man's truth prevail?"

The format of the book contributes to its weaknesses. The pieces in the beginning are a sort of continuous ramble, and the novel follows like thin flesh stretched over the skeleton of ideas that undergirds it. Even in various technical guises prophecy is hard to take, especially prophecy that comes rather easily: 1985 is less than seven years off. Burgess consistently makes shrewd and stimulating comments but the book as a whole is less than the sum of its parts, and one only wishes that Burgess, whose linguistic observations are always lively and often brilliant, had spent more time on Newspeak, exploring that aspect of Orwell's anti-utopia.

Burgess's book will no doubt come closer to the reality of 1984 than Orwell's but Burgess doesn't seem to be able to value *1984* on any terms other than the accuracy of its predictions. He dismisses its more universal appeal, declaring that Orwell tells us nothing Milton didn't tell Cromwell's England about human liberties. He says Orwell didn't foresee trade unionism or Arab oil power and claims *1984* "rests on air, like a castle in Spain." Burgess may have fit Orwell's bill better than Orwell did, but his achievement is of much more limited interest and value. *1984* is artistic; *1985* is journalistic. Art delves into the human mind and heart to outlive the boundaries and inaccuracies of realistic detail; we throw out newspapers every day, and for good reason. *1985* is more or less disposable. *1984*, despite oversights, simplifications and overdescriptions, will continue to be important well beyond its time.

Marc Granetz

Marc Granetz is a freelance writer.

Lying Low
by Diane Johnson
(Knopf; $8.95)

Four decisive days in the lives of four residents of a boarding house told with impressive economy and skill. But the novel can't seem to make up its mind whether it is about the terror of life in the "American now," or, simpler, profounder, the terror of life. The problem is the ending: it belongs in one of those simple-minded 1960s films in which the source of all evil is "Amerika," but seems much too jarring in a novel as full of subtleties of observation and atmosphere as this one. *Lying Low* is set in the small California town of Orris and its dominant mood is fear, the California novel fear that makes sunny afternoons seem sullen, spooky, big with latent danger and death.

The four people in Johnson's rooming house are hiding from menaces real and imagined. Marybeth, an ex-weatherwoman, is a fugitive from the FBI; she's wanted for a fatal bombing committed during her *aux barricades* phase in the 1960s. Ouida Senza, also a young woman and an illegal alien from Brazil, is hiding from the immigration authorities. (Ouida has a comic and touching relationship with the English language which Johnson renders nicely. Indeed each of Johnson's characters thinks and speaks in different idioms, which is such a relief from the monotony of the unchanging narrative voice one gets in so many novels that it is worth a parenthetical salute.) Johnson's most attractive and successful character, Theodora Wait, is in hiding from age and death. A former ballerina who now runs a ballet school and is the proprietress of the boarding house, Theo is a woman of philanthropic spirit, ruminative emotions, and respectable liberalism. (We see the mailman deliver *The New Republic* to the boarding house, and though any of the characters could be taking it, I like to think it is decent, sensitive Theo.) Theo's brother Anton is supposed to represent an Ansel Adams-type photographer, but I'm afraid he's far more obviously that familiar feminist type, The Man Who Cares More For Things Than People. Anton, most unsatisfactorily, rounds out Johnson's boarding house cast.

Four days, on the first of which, Wednesday, Johnson creates an atmosphere of unease—Marybeth thinks she's been spotted, Ouida gets an ominous note from the immigration people, and Theo plans to visit a local prison with a group of innocent seeming do-gooders—which she dissipates in desultory episodes on Thursday and Friday. By Saturday, the suspense is gone. Johnson tries to make up for it by adding a dose of horror: she has poor Theo taken hostage by the prisoners and then blown to bits by the trigger-happy forces of justice and right, who, in good 1960s movie fashion, are pantingly eager to kill the prisoners rather than recapture them. But this is an apocalyptic gesture, not a convincing climax, nor, despite some heavy-handed political symbolism, a resonant one. This is a novel happier in its moods than in its incidents. (I especially hated to see a *TNR* reader go up in smoke.)

J. B.

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Washington Diarist

Platitudes

"Things can't go on like this." I don't recall whether it's listed in Flaubert's *Dictionary of Platitudes*. But it certainly would be in any modern collection of clichés, stock phrases and received ideas. It is less a statement of faith than it is an anticipation of disaster or, at best, of continuing decline. The phrase, then, does not really mean what it says. It means the opposite: things *will* go on like this, and are likely to get worse. You hear it said about the economy, and inflation in particular—though about that, rather more from those on the top than in the vast range of the middle or at the bottom. It is not only that objective wretchedness continues or gets worse for those who have so little that they can't really experience inflation. There also seem to be new forms of wretchedness, the gap between how personality might be enriched, for example, and the extent to which it is not. Greater numbers of workers will soon be working the four-day week. The purpose of this change would be to reduce unemployment and to cut down to a minimum the amount of time laboring men and women will spend on alienating and ungratifying work. What I suspect these workers will do is moonlight. The unemployment of others will not diminish and their own alienation will intensify. You hear the same empty words about the decomposition of our literary inheritance and of literature itself. It is hard to see this exactly as a terminal sickness, but who will deny that it is anything less than chronic? You hear those words also about our political system, the individuals who compete within it and about the facade of public goals that hides their paucity of ideas and passions in service of what is merely personal ambition.

I live in Massachusetts and that's where I vote. I was for Paul Tsongas, a young liberal who beat out incumbent Ed Brooke for the Senate. Brooke lost because he had been personally dishonest, but he should have lost because he was politically dishonorable. How he got to be thought a liberal would be a mystery were it not for the fact that he is black, in fact the one seemingly important black in his party. Tsongas seems to have the best of the facile good intentions: it's hard to tell whether he understands how deep the national crisis is. After victory he told NBC that there weren't many political differences between Brooke and him. So much for the enthusiasm of his supporters. Like many other Democrats, but not enough, I voted for Frank Hatch, the Republican gubernatorial contender against a thuggist Democrat, Ed King, who had received the benedictions of New Hampshire's Governor Meldrim Thomson, himself defeated in last Tuesday's sweepstakes, the one authentic joy of the nightwatch. As New Hampshire went, so doubtless will go its neighbor, but probably after too long a wait. Hatch is one of those establishment mugwumps who in better times wouldn't engage serious liberals at all. But these are not those times. Unless you're from the Bay State you may not have heard of Frank Bellotti, who got himself reelected as attorney general. I've been a fan of his ever since 1966 when he ran against the king of the mugwumps, Elliot Richardson, for whom the Cambridge and Beacon Hill high liberals, including my good and usually sagacious friend Ken Galbraith, mounted a campaign that seemed to equate excellence with breeding. With that they launched Richardson on a career in the wars against Vietnam and against integration that was not redeemed when he declined to fire Archibald Cox. The two happened to wear the same school ties, belong to the same clubs and believe deeply in the brotherhood of Boston. Would Richardson have done it for anybody else? Bellotti ran this year against another Harvard building, this one named Weld.

There's been a ruckus raised at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government about the naming of a library for the late Charles Engelhard, whose foundation put a cool million into the Kennedy School's new headquarters. Engelhard was a mining conglomerateur whose vast fortune is based mostly on South Africa's gold and other minerals, plus the sweat of its black labor force. I have little quarrel with those who think linking this enterprise with a Harvard facility not quite apt. At the same time, I realize that these gross incongruities are common almost everywhere and often reflect an effort by the families and heirs of the wicked rich to purge the taint. A young black protester who spoke after the Kennedy School's dedication ceremonies suggested that if Hitler had left a lot of money, Harvard would have named a building after him. Cheap hyperbole. I did not notice any protests, however, when Harvard established, with a benefaction from the Krupp Foundation, a chair in European studies endowed with the name of Krupp.

At retirement, at least in the Senate, everything and everyone is forgiven. The encomium is the rule, except for poor Senator William L. Scott, Republican of Virginia, who had the misfortune to be dubbed by one of the slick sheets as the dumbest member of the Senate and was dumb enough to call a press conference to deny it. By contrast the undistinguished and elongated career of Senator John Sparkman, Democrat of Alabama, in the upper chamber has evoked the usual prattle. (To think that Adlai Stevenson actually chose him as his running mate in 1952 is to be reminded of how frivolously we treat the one heartbeat away from the presidency.) But the most glorious superlatives for any of the holdouts against history have been spent on Senator James Eastland, a mean-spirited old racist with not a few stripes awarded by Joe McCarthy's side of the domestic cold war. What there is to celebrate in his removal from the scene is that his heavy hand will now at last be lifted from the American judiciary. The special unction for do-gooders has been reserved for Senator James Abourezk, Democrat of South Dakota, who claims to be retiring from the Senate because it is inefficient, or some such. The truth is that his constituents were about to call him home, not least because he had become the one most reliably fork-tongued spokesman—far more reliable, for example, than the very reactionary senators Henry Bellmon, Republican of Oklahoma, and James McClure, Republican of Idaho—for Arab politics. One senator suggested to me that Abourezk's opposition to the petroleum industry is that of neither an environmentalist nor a consumerist, but of someone who wants to increase the dependence of the US on the Arab states. Abourezk has been invited to address a fund-raising dinner for *The Nation* magazine, but he's had to promise he won't talk about the Middle East. Come January he'll be free to speak as his own forked tongue is inclined. He'll be lobbying for the Arabs full-time on the Hill and making a bundle at it. Some principles can also be profitable.

M. P.

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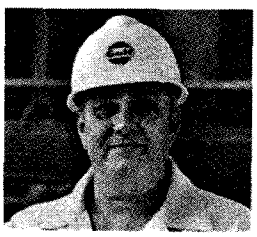

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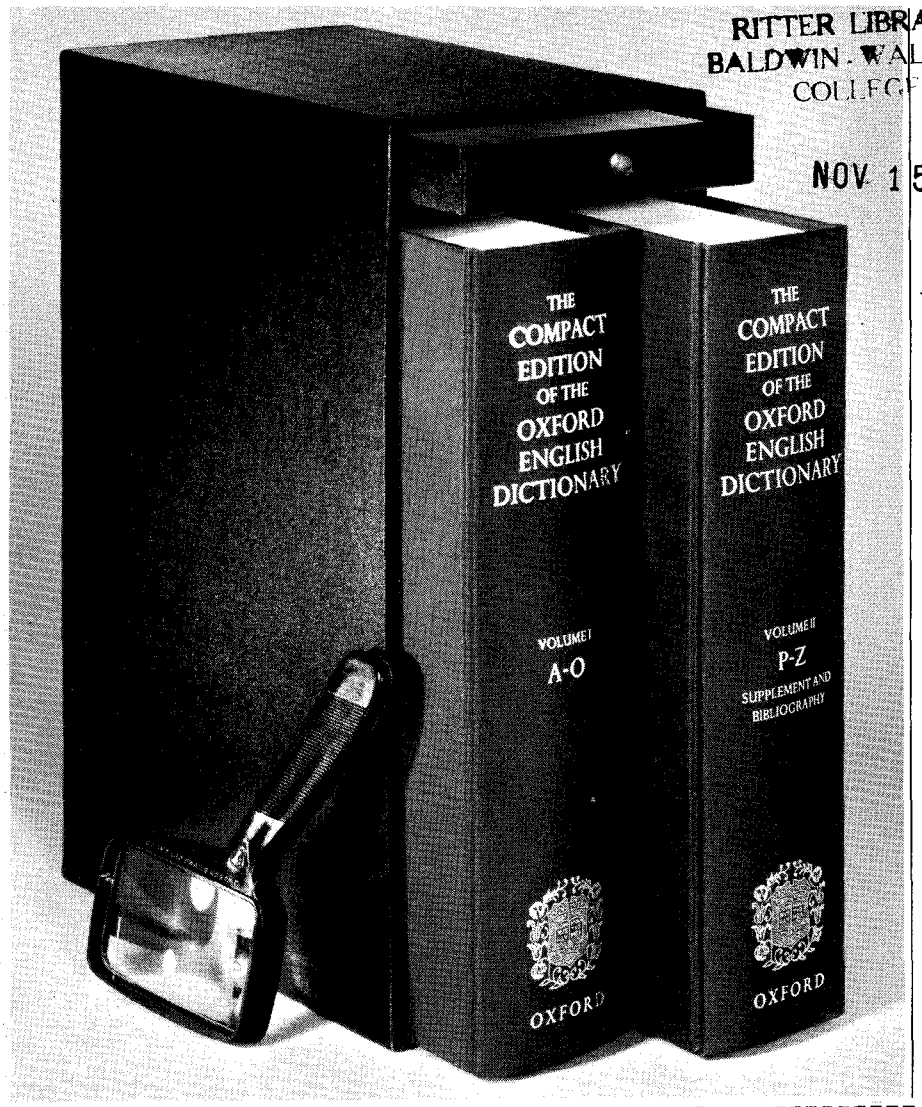

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